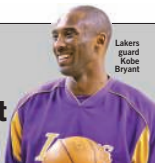


STARS AND STRIPES[®]

Bryant settles with accuser in rape civil suit

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Lakers guard Kobe Bryant

MPs in Iraq stay focused before heading home

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Biffle seen as a quiet favorite

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The car of NASCAR driver Greg Biffle

Volume 2, No.326 © SS 2005 MIDEAST EDITION

FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2005

Wounded reservists decry poor health care

Congress told of treatment opportunities delayed, denied Page 6



White House honors Red Sox

Page 29

"So, like, what took you so long?" President Bush kids Boston Red Sox players, coaches and officials Wednesday afternoon at the White House ceremony honoring the team for its 2004 World Series win. Bush noted that when the Sox last won a championship, "Woodrow Wilson lived here." The team also visited injured servicemembers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

JOE GROMELSKI/Stars and Stripes

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Fight over brain-damaged woman: A Florida newspaper and television station argued Wednesday that the public has a right to know what is in a document filed by a Florida state agency hoping to intervene in a right-to-die case.

Media General, owner of The Tampa Tribune and WFLA television, sued to get access to the Department of Children & Families document.

Attorneys involved in the case have said DCF is looking into reports that Terri Schiavo—the 41-year-old woman at the center of a life-and-death legal battle between her husband and parents—was abused. The agency wants to delay removal of the feeding tube 60 days so it can investigate.

R.I. nightclub fire: The families of four nightclub employees killed in the 2003 West Warwick, R.I., fire are asking a judge to order the club's owners to pay death benefits and lost wages.

Jeffrey and Michael Derderian, owners of The Station nightclub, did not have workers' compensation insurance when their club burned to the ground.

The Station fire, sparked by a rock band's pyrotechnics, killed 100 people and injured more than 200 others on Feb. 20, 2003.

Hunting bin Laden claim: A man who told authorities in Detroit that he was headed to Syria to try to collect a \$25 million bounty on Osama bin Laden faces charges of attempting to smuggle more than \$13,000, a Taser stun device, ammunition and radiation detectors.

According to an indictment, Matt Mihlsen, a naturalized U.S. citizen who was born in Syria, left Dallas on Feb. 15 for Damascus.

Mihlsen, 47, of suburban Fort Worth, Texas, changed planes at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, but an outbound search of his checked luggage revealed that he was attempting to take a number of items with him to Syria including a Taser, a bulletproof vest and three Geiger counters.

Mihlsen was indicted on charges of making false statements to federal investigators, trying to smuggle bulk cash out of the United States and attempting to export money and goods to Syria without a permit or authorization.

Secret Bush tapes: Tapes of President Bush that were secretly recorded by an old friend and released to the media now are in the possession of the president's private attorney, the White House said Tuesday.

Doug Wead allowed journalists to hear and broadcast the tapes as he promoted his new book on presidential parents. But he said last week he had regrets about that and was turning the tapes over to Bush and giving the proceeds from his book to charity.

World

Pope's health: Pope John Paul II is "progressively improving" and following church activities daily, the Vatican said Thursday, suggesting he might be released from the hospital in time for Easter celebrations on March 27.

Papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the wound on John Paul's throat after surgery to insert a breathing tube was healing.

World Bank leadership: World Bank President James Wolfensohn said Thursday that U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz was no longer in the running to head the Washington-based international financial institution.



Pakistan gang rape: Mukhtar Mai, victim of a gang rape, sheds tears Thursday after a court's decision in Multan, Pakistan, that overturned the conviction of a village elder and four other men. The men had been sentenced to death for allegedly ordering the rape as punishment for her brother's illicit sex with a woman from another family. A sixth man's death sentence was reduced to life in prison, said Ramzan Joya, Mai's lawyer.

Wolfowitz was no longer in the running to head the Washington-based international financial institution.

The New York Times reported early this week that Wolfowitz was under serious consideration to become the next president of the World Bank, which will be open when Wolfensohn leaves June 1 after two five-year terms.

War crimes suspects: A wartime Bosnian Muslim army commander pleaded not guilty Thursday to charges that he played a role in murders and rapes committed by foreign Islamic fighters during the 1992-95 war.

The indictment against retired Gen. Rasim Delic, 55, accuses him of failing to prevent crimes or punish perpetrators under his authority.

Italian mafia raids: Police launched a pre-dawn raid Thursday targeting more than 50 suspected mobsters, most of whom are believed to be involved in a bloody turf war with a competing clan, authorities said.

Police in Naples and several other cities were seeking 52 suspects, including Paolo di Lauro, the alleged head of one of the feuding factions of the Camorra crime syndicate whose turf war has claimed dozens of lives in the suburbs of Naples over the past year, said an official.

Control over the drug trade is believed to be at the origin of the clan war.

Space station supplies: A Russian cargo ship carrying food, equipment and other supplies docked successfully with the international space station Wednesday, an official said.

The unmanned Progress M-52 spacecraft had lifted from the Russian-leased Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Monday, carrying about 2.75 tons of food, water, fuel and research equipment for Russian cosmonaut Salizhan Sharipov and U.S. astronaut Leroy Chiao, who have been on

the station since October.

Budget airline troubles: A British court ruled Wednesday that budget airline Ryanair misled customers about the price of some flights, but said it could keep listing before-tax fares as long as it warned customers it was doing so.

A Chelmsford Crown Court jury found the Dublin-based Ryanair Holdings PLC guilty of six breaches of the Consumer Protection Act for Web site promotions in which it omitted the words "excluding tax."

The court did not immediately say whether it would fine the airline for the violations.

Charges against al-Zarqawi: Jordan charged Iraq insurgency leader Abu-Musab al-Zarqawi and another Jordanian militant Wednesday with carrying out an August 2003 attack on its Baghdad embassy that killed 18 people.

Both al-Zarqawi and Muammar Ahmed Youssef al-Jaghbeer have already been convicted and sentenced to death in Jordan for other terror attacks.

Al-Jaghbeer is in Jordanian custody but Al-Zarqawi is believed to be in Iraq, where he heads an insurgent faction. Both men face the death sentence if found guilty.

War on terrorism

Daniel Pearl slaying: A court in Pakistan on Thursday turned over an Islamic militant for police questioning over the killing of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl against President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, police said.

The suspect, Mohammed Sohail, was arrested in Karachi on Wednesday after a shootout with police.

Sohail was wanted in the killing of Pearl, who was kidnapped Jan. 23, 2002, in Karachi while researching a story on Islamic militancy. Pearl was later beheaded.

Stories and photo from wire services

Correction

An article in Thursday's editions on the transformation of U.S. bases in Europe gave the wrong location for Dal Molin airfield in Italy. It is near Vicenza. The story also misidentified the 352nd Special Operations Group at RAF Mildenhall, England. In addition, Wiesbaden is not part of the Grafenwohr training area.

Comics, horoscopes and
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AP photos

Left: An unidentified man cries for his brother, who was seriously injured by one of the two suicide car bombs that exploded outside the Interior Ministry in Baghdad on Thursday, killing at least two policemen. Above: A U.S. soldier patrols near Baghdad's Green Zone on Thursday. The number of U.S. military deaths in Iraq has topped 1,500.

U.S. military deaths in Iraq passes 1,500

Two troops killed in Baghdad roadside bombing; another dies in Babil

BY TODD PITMAN
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The number of U.S. troops killed in Iraq has topped 1,500, an Associated Press count showed Thursday after the military announced the deaths of three Americans, while car bombs targeting Iraqi security forces killed at least four people in separate attacks.

Two suicide car bombs exploded outside the Interior Ministry in eastern Baghdad on Thursday, killing at least two policemen and wounding five others, police Maj. Jabar Hassan said. Officials at nearby al-Kindi hospital said 15 people were injured in the blasts, part of the relentless wave of violence since the Jan. 30 elections.

Another car bomb targeting a police convoy exploded in Bagduba, 35 miles northeast of the capital, killing one Iraqi policeman and a civilian, the U.S. military said. Six police and 10 other civilians were also wounded.

Amid the violence, interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi extended the state of emergency, first announced nearly four months ago, for another 30 days until the end of March. The order remains in effect throughout the country, except in northern Kurdish areas.

The emergency decree includes a nighttime curfew and gives the government extra powers to make arrests without warrants and launch police and military operations when it deems necessary.

The latest reported American deaths brought the toll to 1,502 since the United States launched the war in Iraq in March 2003, according to the AP count.

The military said two U.S. troops died Wednesday in Baghdad of injuries suffered when a roadside bomb struck their vehicle.

Another soldier was killed the same day in Babil province, part of an area known as the "Triangle of Death" because of the frequency of insurgent attacks on U.S. and Iraqi forces.

The car bombers in Baghdad were trailing a police convoy that was trying to enter the Interior Ministry, Hassan said. Iraqi security forces opened fire on the vehicles and disabled them before they could arrive at a main checkpoint, said Col. Adnan Abdul-Rahman, an Interior Ministry spokesman.

Iraqi forces also killed one Iraqi man during clashes with gunmen in the northern city of Mosul, army Capt. Sabah Yassin said.

Two soldiers were injured. Also in the north, insurgents blew up a gas pipeline that links Kirkuk to Dibis, about 20 miles away, said Col. Nozad Mohammad, a state oil security official in Kirkuk. Mohammad said the blast would cut gas production, but he could not say by how much.

Talks aimed at forging a new coalition government faltered Wednesday over Kurdish demands for more land and concerns that the dominant Shiite alliance seeks to establish an

Islamic state, delaying the planned first meeting of parliament.

Shiite and Kurdish leaders, Iraq's new political powers, failed to reach agreement after two days of negotiations in the northern city of Irbil, with the clergy-backed candidate for prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, leaving with only half the deal he needed.

The Shiite-led United Iraqi Alliance, which has 140 seats in the 275-member National Assembly, hopes to win backing from the 75 seats held by Kurdish political parties so it can muster the required two-thirds majority to insure control of top posts in the new government.

Al-Jaafari indicated after the talks that the alliance was ready to accept a Kurdish demand that one of its leaders, Jalal Talabani, become president. However, he would not commit to other demands, including the expansion of Kurdish autonomous areas south to the oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

Kurdish leaders have demanded constitutional guarantees for their northern regions, including self-rule and reversal of the "Arabization" of Kirkuk and other northern areas. Saddam relocated Iraqi Arabs to the region in a bid to secure the oil fields there.

Politicians had hoped to convene the new parliament by Sunday. But Ali Faisal, of the Shiite Political Council, said the date was now postponed and that a new date had not been set.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Wednesday, at least 1,500 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,140 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department. The figures include four military civilians.

The AP count is nine higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Wednesday.

The British military has reported 86 deaths; Italy, 20; Ukraine, 18; Poland, 17; Spain, 11; Bosnia, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Latvia and Kazakhstan one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,362 U.S. military members have died, according to A.P.'s count.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A soldier was killed Wednesday in Iraq's Babil province.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Army Spc. Lizbeth Robles, 31, Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, died Tuesday from injuries suffered in a vehicle accident Monday in Beijing, Iraq; assigned to the 360th Transportation Company, 68th Corps Support Battalion, 43rd Area Support Group, Fort Carson, Colo.

■ Army Sgt. Julio E. Negron, 28, Pompano Beach, Fla., died Monday in Beijing, Iraq, in a vehicle accident, assigned to the 360th Transportation Company, 68th Corps Support Battalion, 43rd Area Support Group, Fort Carson, Colo.

■ Army Pfc. Danny L. Anderson, 29, Corpus Christi, Texas, died Sunday in Baghdad from small arms fire; assigned to the 26th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.

February saw fewest U.S. losses since July

BY LISA BURGESS
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — February was the best month U.S. forces in Iraq have had in a while, with just 58 U.S. troops killed, the fewest in a single month since last July, when 54 died.

Still, the U.S. death toll in Iraq surpassed 1,500 on Thursday, even though violence has fallen to pre-election levels, according to defense officials.

"Iraq is still a very dangerous place," said Lt. Col. Barry Venable. "There are still various enemy forces that are determined to disrupt the Iraqi march to independence."

"That said," Venable added, "it appears the overall level of attacks has gone down to the levels they were prior to the pre-election

and election period."

November, December and January were among the most deadly months for U.S. troops since the United States attacked Iraq in March 2003.

Those three months represented an unusual spike, and were "anomalies" rather than the leading edge of an upward trend, Venable said.

"In November, there was [the fight in] Fallujah, and December and January were the run-ups to elections," Venable said. "Then on election day, [the insurgents] threw everything

they had at us."

U.S. troops were being attacked with improvised explosive devices, mortars and gunfire at a rate upwards of 100 incidents per day in the late months of 2004 and in January, a defense official with knowledge of internal unit records told Stars and Stripes.

Before that time, there were about 50 attacks on coalition personnel each day, said the official, who asked not to be named because he is not responsible for releasing such data.

Now the attacks are back down to about 50 per day, the official said.

Moreover, "we're finding that the attacks against coalition forces are less effective," the official said.

U.S. troops are growing particularly adept at locating IEDs, "before they go boom," the official said, crediting "better training, better [detection] equipment, and better recognition" for that success.

Insurgents are also continuing to focus their most deadly attacks against Iraqis, particularly the new Iraqi police and military forces, which are still finding their feet, Army Gen. John Abizaid, head of U.S. forces in the Middle East, told the House Armed Services Committee on Wednesday.

E-mail Lisa Burgess at: burgessl@stripes.com

"It appears the overall level of attacks has gone down to the levels they were prior to the pre-election and election period."

Lt. Col. Barry Venable



Sgt. James Becker, 27, of Radcliff, Ky., a squad leader for the 127th Military Police Company, center, chats with other members of the unit during a recent stop at the Khadamiyah Police Station in Baghdad. The 127th, which has run daily patrols out of Forward Operating Base Falcon for the last 11 months, is responsible for 19 Iraqi police stations in the city's northwest sector.

PHOTOS BY VINCE LITTLE
Stars and Stripes

With departure near, MPs stay focused

BY VINCE LITTLE
Stars and Stripes

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq — With about a month left on its yearlong deployment, the 127th Military Police Company knows that now is not the time to lose focus.

Before a recent patrol in northwest Baghdad, Sgt. Ian Parker, 22, of Detroit, warned unit members against complacency.

"The second you're not looking, thinking you can take the Kevlar off or turn your back, that's when something happens," said Parker, a company team leader.

During the last 11 months, the company, which works for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 10th Mountain Division, has endured sniper attacks, ambushes, suicide bombers and bombs hidden along roads or in a vehicle. The unit arrived as the insurgency flared up, at a time when U.S. forces were still combating the country for weapons of mass destruction.

After a decline in violent incidents the past two months, the company has witnessed a recent spike.

"In our sector, violence is a little more active now than it was 11 months ago," said Sgt. James Becker, 27, of Radcliff, Ky., a squad leader. "But it's not something you can dwell on. ... We still have a job to do."

The company patrols day and

night, covering an area of northwest Baghdad that includes 19 Iraqi police, patrol and traffic stations. Becker said certain Iraqi communities are now more willing to assist in the search for suspected insurgents.

"When we first got here, we were all pretty edgy because things were heating up," said Pvt. 2nd Class Jeremy Miller, 20, of Staples, Minn., a company gunner. "The gunners were always pointing at vehicles and yelling at everybody to back off. As the year progressed, we've tried more to win over hearts and minds. We're not yelling as much or pointing guns while controlling traffic."

Still, Iraqi motorists once leery of coming within a half-mile of U.S. convoys have recently displayed more bravado, he said.

"They'll sneak up on us now, trying to test us. I've actually shot at more cars in the last half of the year than the first half," Miller said, referring to the practice of firing warning shots to remind Iraqi drivers to maintain a secure distance.

With that departure date looming next month, the company's hierarchy is preaching diligence and attention to detail.

"It's natural to get complacent toward the end, when you're so close to leaving," Becker said. "Just because nothing's happened in the last few months doesn't mean it won't."

E-mail Vince Little at: littlevp@stripes.osd.mil

Iraqi police showing improvement, U.S. military says

BY VINCE LITTLE
Stars and Stripes

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq — Members of a seasoned U.S. military police company that's monitored the treacherous streets of Northwest Baghdad say they've seen dramatic improvements in the Iraqi police force.

"The Iraqi police are more confident and competent at what they do," said Sgt. James Becker, 27, of Radcliff, Ky., a squad leader in the 127th Military Police Company. "They're actually out there looking for [terrorists], as opposed to when we first got here and they were a little clueless. Now, they're much more proactive."

For the past year, the 127th MPs has spent much of its time working with 19 Iraqi police, patrol and traffic stations, said Capt. Kevin Hanrahan, 30, of Whitman, Mass., the 127th MP commander. The military police routinely meet with Iraqi police chiefs, collect statistical data on training programs, deal with contractors and construction projects, and monitor the hunt for terror suspects.

Sgt. Ian Parker, 22, of Detroit, a company team leader, said he's noticed a difference in the atti-



A 127th Military Police Company member stands watch on the roof of the Khadamiyah Police Station in Baghdad during a recent patrol.

tude of Iraqi forces over the past year.

"When we first got here, they were willing but not really equipped. They didn't have the weapons and training they really needed," he said. "We'd tell them to look into a building and check for insurgents, and they'd be scared. Now, they're a little more secure in their abilities to do the job."

The Iraqis also can effectively set up random checkpoints on their own, "without us having to tell them," Parker added.

After arriving last April, the 127th MPs acted primarily in an observation role while providing security for Iraqi stations, Becker said. Two months into the deployment, they began teaching, training and coaching the Iraqi police on patrols.

"I've seen it come from nothing and start to rebuild itself," Parker said.

"We saw the first free election Iraq has ever had. One of our translators said he almost cried when he voted; said he wanted to weep. That made me proud to be an American."

Saddam's lawyer: Judge's murder shows Iraq too violent for trial

The Associated Press

TOKYO — Saddam Hussein's chief lawyer said Thursday that the murder this week of a judge appointed to a tribunal to try the former dictator and his aides shows that Iraq remains too dangerous for such trials and urged authorities to delay proceedings by at least another year.

Ziad al-Khasasneh, who heads a committee set up to provide the former Iraqi president's legal defense, said he expects vio-

lence in Iraq to escalate unless the tribunal's proceedings are delayed.

"I can't imagine how the court would begin," he said. "The streets are burning, the judges are killed. There are a lot of problems in Iraq."

"The advocates and the judge, they need a quiet area to read, to study, to discuss," al-Khasasneh said in Japan, where he was trying to raise support. "It is impossible to make these things this year, or after this year."

On Tuesday, three gunmen in a speeding car killed Judge Barwez Mohammed Mahmoud al-Merwani and his son, lawyer Aryan Barwez al-Merwani, outside their Baghdad home.

Though the motive for the killings was still not clear, on Monday the tribunal had issued referrals for five former regime members, including one of Saddam's half-brothers, for crimes against humanity. Referrals are similar to indictments and are the final step before trials can start.

Al-Khasasneh, who is based in Amman, Jordan, said he has also received threats that he will "be cut to pieces" if he travels to Iraq to defend Saddam.

The Iraqi Special Tribunal was set up in late 2003 after Saddam was toppled. But after five potential candidates were killed, some judges declined calls to work at the court.

Al-Khasasneh said he opposes the tribunal in principle and considers Saddam to be Iraq's legal president.

House GOP wants more funding for defense

By ALAN FRAM

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans want to add about \$1.8 billion for armored vehicles and other defense needs to President Bush's request for the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and other operations abroad, figures obtained by The Associated Press.

They also want to pare about half the \$4 billion he proposed for Afghan rebuilding, aid to other allies and for State Department expenditures, congressional aides say.

GOP leaders of the House Appropriations Committee planned to release their version of the war package on Thursday. An aide, who like others spoke only on condition of anonymity Wednesday, said its overall price tag would be just below Bush's \$81.9 billion proposal.

Congress is likely to approve legislation very much resembling Bush's overall package this spring. While House leaders hope to approve their bill later this month, the Senate isn't expected to produce its version until April.

The bill is expected to also include aid to Indian Ocean countries recovering from the December tsunami. It was unclear whether it would be the same as the \$950 million Bush proposed.

The House changes reflect a bipartisan desire to be generous to U.S. aid services abroad, despite concerns lawmakers had

with parts of Bush's proposal.

Some have said Bush's request for \$4.6 billion to make Army brigades more self-sufficient could wait until next year's regular defense bill. Even so, the money is in the committee's bill.

"Though concerns are being raised — the committee is compelled to fully fund the Army's request at this time by an urgency to address the significant challenges the Army now faces," a report accompanying the bill states.

At the same time, the House bill underscores a reluctance by many Republicans to spend too much on foreign aid projects some consider questionable. This has been fed by Bush's ongoing struggle to control record federal budget deficits.

About \$570 million of the \$2 billion Bush sought for Afghanistan's reconstruction would be cut, one aide said. That included \$25 million for starting a

law school and money for building courthouses and community housing and helping venture capitalists make investments.

Overall, the \$74.9 billion Bush requested for the Pentagon was to grow to about \$76.7 billion.

The Army and Marines, doing most of the fighting, would get more than Bush sought, especially for equipment. The House bill would add \$2.2 billion to Bush's \$16.1 billion request for procuring weapons and equipment, including extra money for armored trucks and other vehicles.

U.S. funds fall short in hunt for bin Laden

By KATHERINE SHRADER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Osama bin Laden remains Public Enemy No. 1, but recent developments raise questions about the ability of U.S. forces to track down the elusive terrorist and the hunt more than three years after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Fresh reminders of the unsuccessful search come as intelligence officials indicated this week that bin Laden has been in contact with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the top al-Qaida figure in Iraq, enlisting his help in planning attacks inside the United States.

In a rare mention of his name Thursday, President Bush said bin Laden hopes to attack again on U.S. soil and "stopping him is the greatest challenge of our day."

"We're on a constant hunt for bin Laden. We're keeping the pressure on him, keeping him in hiding," Bush said at a ceremonial swearing-in for Homeland Security Secretary Mike Chertoff.

Current and former government officials say there is no doubt that the Bush administration wants bin Laden "dead or alive," as the president said shortly after Sept. 11. But skills and dollars may fall short of desire.

Army Gen. John Abizaid, chief of U.S. Central Command, told the Senate Armed Services Committee this week that bin Laden and the al-Qaida senior leadership have been "our priority target" since Sept. 11 but added, "It's important for all of us to know that military forces

The long search for Osama bin Laden

Even before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the U.S. government was offering a reward for information leading to the capture of al-Qaida founder and Saudi exile Osama bin Laden — wanted in connection with other U.S. attacks.

Confirmed or suspected al-Qaida attacks before Sept. 11



Matchbook with U.S. reward information from Peshawar, Pakistan, near the Afghanistan border in 2000

Sources: State Department Rewards for Justice; Congressional Research Service

AP

do best in attacking the network as opposed to looking for a specific person."

Bin Laden is believed to have evaded capture first during the 2001 battle of Tora Bora in Afghanistan and then by hiding along the Afghan-Pakistan border with his top deputy and a circle of supporters protecting him at all costs.

U.S. personnel including CIA paramilitary contractors and some of the military's highly trained special forces have been on the hunt. In a recent report,

the Congressional Research Service said 18,000 U.S. forces remain in Afghanistan, running down al-Qaida and Taliban joined by thousands of Pakistani forces and agents.

Yet a former intelligence official, speaking on condition of anonymity, wondered about recent decisions on U.S. resources. The official said intelligence agencies have been "on edge" from Afghanistan to Iraq for the Jan. 30 elections there, and it's unclear whether they went back.

Art exhibit gives faces to troops killed in Iraq

By WILLIAM KATES

The Associated Press

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — It's hard to forget the face of a fallen soldier. Imagine the impression created by 1,483 of them.

Portraits of American servicemen and women killed in Iraq go on display Thursday at a 200-ft stretch of wall in Syracuse University's Shaffer Art Building. The 5-by-7-inch images will stay up until April 1.

"It's a powerful sight to take in," said Syracuse University professor Stephen Zaima, who teaches painting. "It's not about the artists or their styles. It's not about the war or politics. It's about these people who have given their lives."

The exhibition, "To Never Forget: Faces of the Fallen," builds on the work done last year by students and faculty at the College of Marine in California, who produced 1,109 portraits.

The 374 others — done using pencil, ink, oils, watercolors, pen, even computers — were created by students, faculty and staff members at Syracuse as well as local artists. The portraits



Kristin Sorrentino, a Syracuse University advertising design senior, paints a portrait of U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Joseph E. Rodriguez of Fort Hood, Texas, on Thursday. SU students, faculty and community members added 350 portraits of soldiers killed in Iraq to an already existing exhibition of about 1,100 from the College of Marine, in California.

are of soldiers who were killed up to Feb. 19.

As of Thursday, at least 1,502 members of the U.S. military

have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count.

Ashley McDowell, a sophomore art photography student from Seabrook, N.H., used a pencil to draw Army Sgt. Charles Webb, 22, of Hamilton, Ohio, who died in November in a roadside bombing.

"Our soldiers are showing the ultimate in generosity. I think people felt like it was a privilege to participate, a way to return some of that generosity," McDowell said.

The artists based their work mainly on newspaper and Internet photographs of the soldiers. Some were given additional personal information.

Elena Peteva, a graduate student from Sofia, Bulgaria, learned that Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class John D. House was in Iraq when his son was born on Christmas Eve. House, a 28-year-old medic from Ventura, Calif., was killed Jan. 26 along with 30 Marines when his helicopter crashed in bad weather.

"He had warm, understanding eyes and a very sweet expression. I know he would have made a good father," said Peteva. "I will always remember his face."

The portraits will eventually be sent to the soldiers' families.

No objector status

SAVANNAH, Georgia — An Army mechanic who refused to deploy to Iraq for a second tour of duty — saying he had become opposed to war after serving in the 2003 invasion — said an investigating officer recommended the Army deny him conscientious objector status.

Sgt. Kevin Benderman, 40, has been charged with desertion for refusing to deploy with his unit and faces up to seven years in prison if convicted by a court-martial. His objector application is being handled separately.

A Fort Stewart spokesman, Lt. Col. Robert Whetstone, could not immediately confirm the recommendation. Benderman said a letter with the recommendation was given to him Wednesday by his military attorney.

A portion of the letter, provided by Benderman, noted he'd been in the objector claim until just before his 7th deployment date.

Benderman conceded his enlistment was to end in October — before he would have returned from Iraq. He denied that was the reason he sought objector status.

From The Associated Press

Fisher foundation searches for new sites to house war injured

BY SANDRA JONTZ
Stars and Stripes

As more troops return from war zones needing long-term medical care, the Fisher House Foundation has shifted its focus on where to build houses that accommodate the wounded and their visiting families, officials said.

"We have made supporting servicemen and women wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their families, our No. 1 priority ... which includes building Fisher Houses at medical centers where they're going to be receiving their long-term care," said Jim Weiskopf, foundation spokesman.

The nonprofit foundation founded in 1990 by philanthropists Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher originally built houses only at military treatment facilities. Ten years ago, it expanded and built its first Department of Veterans Affairs facility house in Albany, N.Y. There now are six VA Fisher Houses, and a seventh near completion.

"The change for us at the VA is that the Fisher House Foundation has committed to adding houses at our facilities," said Jim Manske, director of social work services at the VA.

"We're beginning to see a lot of casualties from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom being treated at our facilities, patients who are still on active duty, and their families are coming from long distances and need lodging," Manske said. A Fisher House is "a home away from home," conceived to give families a place to stay while loved ones receive medical care. They feature private bedrooms and common kitchens, laundry facilities and dining and living rooms, and normally are located within walking distance of the treatment center or have transportation available.

About 8,500 families a year stay at the foundation's 32 Fisher Houses. Two of them are at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, the sole location outside of the United States.

The foundation's firm-to-build list of eight more facilities throughout the United States would place houses at military and VA medical treatment facilities that specialize in treating combat-related injuries, such as traumatic brain injuries, severe burns and paralysis.

"During peacetime, the largest group we take care of are veterans suffering from cancer and undergoing radiation and chemotherapy treatment," Weiskopf said. "But gradually, over time and because of the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, that focus has changed to young soldiers ... who at some point in time, do not need to occupy a hospital bed but need to go to the hospital every day."

A VA facility Fisher House might be built in Richmond, Va., at the center that specializes in traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. "We haven't even received a formal proposal, but we just know it's coming," Weiskopf said of the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center.

Across the board, occupancy is at 90 percent or greater, but for those houses treating patients from Iraq and Afghanistan, occupancy is 100 percent with wait lists, Weiskopf said.

For those families, the average less than \$10 a day fee is waived. And if the Fisher House is full, the foundation ensures the family does not pay to stay at an on-base facility, such as a Navy Lodge, or a local hotel, he said.



SEAN E. COBB/Stars and Stripes

At the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center Fisher House in Germany, Lisa Sallee, her husband Air Force Staff Sgt. Ricky Sallee and their daughter, Brenna, speak for their stay. "We have made supporting servicemen and women wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their families, our No. 1 priority," said Jim Weiskopf, Fisher House Foundation spokesman, as the foundation looks to build new locations.

New facilities

The Fisher House Foundation is turning its focus toward supporting the war wounded and their families. New facilities are in the pipeline.

- **Approved:**
- A second Madigan Army Medical Center, Fort Lewis, Wash.
- Haley VA Medical Center, Tampa, Fla.
- **Pending:**
- A third Brooke Army Medical Center, San Antonio, Texas
- Blanchfield Army Community Hospital, Fort Campbell, Ky.
- Palo Alto VA Medical Center, Calif.
- **Under study:**
- A second Naval Medical Center, San Diego, Calif.
- West Los Angeles VA Medical Center, Calif.
- Dallas VA Medical Center, Texas

Source: Fisher House Foundation

The houses do not take reservations, and individuals or families need to contact the manager of a specific Fisher House for arrangements. Each medical center commander or director sets eligibility criteria for their specific population, Weiskopf said.

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At hearing, injured reservists decry poor health care

BY LOU SHANE III
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Petty officer Anthony Cuomo believes if he were an active-duty sailor, the Navy would have already taken care of the shoulder injury he suffered while training in Iraq.

But instead the reservist, who joined after serving as a New York City firefighter during the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, said he has undergone 21 months of confusion over his military status and rights, and is still waiting for additional surgeries to repair torn muscles.

"In my mind, there is one word for this discrimination," he said Wednesday, during testimony before a congressional panel investigating the treatment of wounded troops.

Top military officials acknowledged at the hearing that such health care inequities do exist, despite efforts to ensure equitable care for all those injured in combat zones.

One man praised the medical professionals who have treated him — one doctor told him he was a "sailor and a patient, not a reservist" — but said administrators have delayed and denied treatments for him.

At one point, he said, Navy officials classified his debilitating shoulder and head pain as "minor" and noncombat-related. His shoulder separation came during a training exercise inside Iraq.

Members of Congress called that testimony upsetting.

"I'm disappointed that we're back here again to hear about the same problems that we've all worked so hard to fix," said Rep. J. Michael McHugh, R-N.Y., chairman of a House subcommittee on military personnel. "These reports are disturbing."

Chief Warrant Officer Stephen Keeton said after initially receiving exemplary treatment overseas for his injuries, he returned home to find discrepancies how reservists were handled.

"I was really dismayed when an Army chaplain boarded our bus full of wounded troops, and began to ask if we were Reserve or active duty," he said. "If it was Guard or Reserve he passed them up, and if it was an active-duty member he began to talk with them."

"He said we would receive the care we needed when we got to the destination station, but he was there for the active-duty guys."

Army Surgeon General LT. Gen. Joseph Webb said of the 21,000 Army guardsmen and reservists injured in the war on terror, nearly 16,000 have finished their rehabilitation and nearly 10,000 have been returned to duty.

"I don't think there's another system in the world that could do that," he said. "But improvements to the seamless transition of care are still needed."

The hearing also covered health care problems not related to duty status. Senior Airman Anthony Pizzifredi, who lost his left leg to a land mine in Iraq, said Gen. Webb said he visited and knew little about prosthetics and other treatment for amputees.

Keeton said just days after the rocket attack that injured him, he managed to call his wife and sons to let them know he was recovering. To his dismay, his family had no idea he had been injured.

All of the panelists praised the medical community. They called the doctors and medical experts who treated them heroes. But they said that administrative changes need to be made to ensure the wounded troops aren't overwhelmed by bureaucratic mistakes.

Representatives from all four services told the congressional panel that they are committed to providing needed medical care to every soldier returning from combat overseas.

The hearing was solely to gather information; no action was prescribed by the committee.

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Army and Army Reserve miss February recruitment goal

BY LISA BURGESS
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — For the first time in almost five years, the active-duty Army missed its monthly recruiting goal in February, a failure directly related to public concern about the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, an Army recruiting official said.

The Army Reserve also missed its goals in February, for the second month in a row.

"People are watching the news," said Doug Smith, a spokesman for U.S. Army Recruiting Command at Fort Knox in Kentucky. "They know the risks of military service in today's environment."

Army recruiters were told to bring 7,050 new soldiers into the fold in February.

Instead, the recruiters found only 5,114 people willing to join the active Army.

In the Army Reserve, the recruiting goal for the month was 1,320, but only 990 new reservists joined the service.

January's recruiting goal for the Army Reserve was also missed, marking the first monthly shortfall for the component since September 2003, Smith said.

Fort Knox does not keep recruiting statistics for the Army National Guard. Recruiting for the Guard is the responsibility of each state component, which sets its own goal numbers.

For the Army and Army Reserve, the February shortfalls leave both components short for the fiscal year, as well.

The Army's goal for recruiting active-duty soldiers for fiscal 2005, which began on Oct. 1, is 80,000. By the end of February, the component was supposed to have recruited 27,362 of those soldiers. But the Army missed that goal by 1,823 soldiers.

The goal for the Army Reserve is 22,175. By the end of February, the component was supposed to have recruited 5,587 of those soldiers. But the Army Reserve missed that goal by 642 soldiers.

Although Smith said Army officials are "keeping a close eye" on the recruiting results for the year, he said recruiters still believe they can make up the shortfalls by the end of the fiscal year, Sept. 30.

"Missing a month is not necessarily missing a year," Smith said.

Nevertheless, he said it was going to be a difficult year," Smith said.

For the first time since 2001, the active Army began fiscal 2005 with far fewer recruits in the Delayed Entry Program, which allows newly joined members to wait for up to a year before reporting for boot camp.

Army recruiters predict to begin the fiscal year with 25 to 35 percent of their new yearly goal "banked" under the delayed entry status, Smith said.

But as of Oct. 1, 2004, when the government's fiscal 2005 began, the Army only had 18 percent of its 2005 goal total in the program, he said.

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Study shows Army's black enlistments drop

Number of African-American volunteers falls 41 percent since 2000

BY TOM PHILPOTT

Special to Stars and Stripes

The Army's wartime recruiting challenge is aggravated by a sharp drop in black enlistments over the last four years, which internal Army and Defense Department polls trace to an unpopular war in Iraq and concerns among blacks with Bush administration policies.

The Army is straining to meet recruiting goals in part because the number of black volunteers has fallen 41 percent — from 23.5 percent of recruits in fiscal 2000 down steadily to 13.9 percent in the first four months of fiscal 2005.

"It's alarming," said Maj. Gen. Michael D. Rochelle, commanding general of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command in Fort Knox, Ky.

No single factor explains the drop, Rochelle said, but clearly the propensity of black youth to enlist is impacted by the war and increasingly by views of parents, teachers, coaches, clergy and others.

"The influence of these youth are causing them to be less inclined to listen to what good the Army could do for them in the long run," said Rochelle, one of the Army's most senior black of-

ficers. Officer recruiting is hit, too. Black enrollment in the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps program is down 36 percent since 2001.

The Marine Corps also reports a drop in black recruits but its racial data on recruits is now suspect due to a government policy, effective Jan. 1, 2003, that allows recruits and all new federal workers to decline to identify their race. The Army has found a way to continue to track accurately its racial data, said S. Douglas Smith, spokesman for the recruiting command.

Rep. Charles B. Rangel, a Democrat whose New York City district includes Harlem, said he isn't too surprised by the Army recruiting data.

"I have not found a black person in support of this war in my district," he said. "The fact that every member of the Congressional Black Caucus emotionally, politically and vigorously opposes this war is an indication of what black folks think throughout this country."

Rangel also said there was "overwhelming disappointment" among blacks after Bush, in a dis-

puted election, became president in 2001, and the disappointment "plummeted after he declared war in Iraq."

Results of the Defense Department's own Youth and Influencer Polls, conducted last May, affirm that administration policies and the Iraq war have lowered the propensity of black youth to enlist, particularly in the Army and Marine Corps, the ground forces taking most of the casualties.

While the war reduced the likelihood of youth in general to join the military, says the Youth Poll report, "Black youth reported being more negatively affected ...

Black youth were less supportive of U.S. troops' presence in Iraq, less likely to feel the war was justified, more disapproving of the Bush administration's handling of foreign affairs and more disapproving of its use of U.S. military forces than were whites or Hispanics.

Black youth unemployment remains above 10 percent, higher than for Hispanics and double that of whites. Blacks also tend to view military pay as more attractive than do other racial groups.

In years past, such statistics indicated a disproportionate number

of African-American youth to see opportunity in the Army. In some years since the draft ended in 1973, the percentage of blacks among Army volunteers approached 30 percent.

In fiscal 2000, blacks still represented almost a quarter of Army recruits. That percentage fell to 22.7 in 2001, 19.9 in '02, 16.4 in '03, 15.9 in '04, and now to 13.9 percent through four months of fiscal 2005. No such decline has been seen among Hispanics or white recruits. Indeed, their percentages among Army recruits grew during the first Bush administration.

Because blacks are 14 percent of all recruit-age youth, their recruiting numbers remain "acceptable," said Rochelle, proportional to blacks in society. But the steep drop in black recruits overall does hurt plans "to grow the Army," he conceded. Congress has ordered a 30,000 increase in the number of active-duty soldiers by October 2007.

Rangel said many blacks still are enticed into service by benefits and cash incentives, which are rising sharply.

"It has amazed me that, notwithstanding the general feeling of the community, they still have enlisted and fought. When my [Guard and Reserve] outfits come home, these guys get their

medals and they're proud. But when I'm called up [to speak], they cheer and stomp their feet, knowing that I fought against the war. It's inconsistent as hell."

Another Army-directed poll, the U.S. Military Image Study, is posted on a Defense Contracting Command Web site, likely by mistake. Based on interviews with 3,236 youth ages 16 to 24, this study says, "Recruiting an all-volunteer Army in times of war is increasingly difficult."

While money for college remains a major motivator to enlist, the Iraq war leaves youth, particularly blacks, conflicted.

"More African-Americans identify having to fight for a cause they don't support as a barrier to military service," the study found.

Fear of being killed or injured was the top reason to avoid service for 26 percent of youth in 2004, almost double the 14 percent reported in 2000.

Poll data also show that more black parents, particularly mothers, worry that their children could be killed or injured in the war.

Many African Americans still believe that black soldiers suffer higher casualty rates than other racial groups. The numbers, Rochelle said, "do not bear that out, neither from Vietnam nor subsequent conflicts."

EUCOM: Baumholder is not part of future Army hub plan

BY TERRY BOYD

Stars and Stripes

BAUMHOLDER, Germany — A report in Thursday's Stars and Stripes that Baumholder would remain a key part of the Army's transformation plans to the German surprised some German workers who thought the base's days were numbered.

On Thursday, Marine Gen. James Jones, commander of the U.S. European Command, was quick to correct the record.

"I'd clarify that Baumholder is not a part of the Kaiserslautern Military Community, which does have strategic enduring value. Baumholder currently houses units of the 1st Armored Division, which may return to the U.S. at some point in the future, so it is not an 'enduring' installation as such," Jones said in a prepared statement issued to Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

During an interview Wednesday with Stars and Stripes, Jones said Baumholder would survive as one of four U.S. Army hubs in Germany in the ongoing restructuring of U.S. military bases in Europe.

Many of the 500 German employees at Baumholder saw the Thursday Stars report, said Harald Weber, deputy chairman of Baumholder's Betriebsvertretung, or German workers council. "We were really surprised."

By early Thursday, however, Installation Management Agency-Europe officials told workers that Baumholder, the largest combat arms base outside the United States, is not on the list of enduring mili-

tary communities, Weber said.

In addition, Jones' statement said, Stuttgart will remain the home of EUCOM headquarters. While it is a joint Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine command, EUCOM officials "consider it one of the four major enduring U.S. military communities in Germany administered by the U.S. Army."

"I want to emphasize that the vision for our entire military force including all services in Europe is clear."

But implementing that vision, he said, "is a work in process, including complex negotiations and decision processes. We are able to discuss some details, while others remain pre-decisional."

Two years of awaiting Baumholder's fate have made German workers at the base "nervous," Weber said. He added that he believes the release of a final Base Realignment and Closure list of domestic bases — scheduled for May — may hasten final word on European bases, he said.

If Baumholder doesn't make it, it will be a crushing blow for workers in this underdeveloped corner of Germany, according to Weber.

Baumholder, about 40 miles from Ramstein, currently has an American population of 12,000 people including 5,600 soldiers in seven major 1st AD units and a dozen non-division units.

"I can say that this area is the end of the world," he said. "If the Army goes out, it's going to be an economic problem for the whole area. It's going to be a disaster."

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Pentagon flag on the block



SHNS

Military personnel render honors as fire and rescue workers unfurl a huge American flag over the side of the Pentagon during rescue and recovery efforts on Sept. 12, 2001, after the Sept. 11 terrorist attack. An auctioneer who has a flag pulled from the wreckage at the Pentagon, not the one pictured above, will auction it on eBay to defray medical bills.

IN THE STATES

NYPD hears new of Grand Central sketch

Kelly: Drawing of terminal 'not something that would indicate an immediate threat'

BY TOM HAYS

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — A drawing of Grand Central Terminal found in the home of a suspect in the Madrid train bombings was "not something that would indicate an immediate threat," Police Commissioner Ray Kelly said.

The crude sketch was "a very basic schematic," and was never deemed cause for alarm, Kelly said on Wednesday in response to a report in the Spanish newspaper El Mundo.

The drawing and other data were on a computer disk seized about two weeks after the train bombings in Madrid that killed 191 people on March 11, 2004, El Mundo reported. Spanish police turned the

disk over to U.S. agents from the FBI and CIA in December.

Kelly said the data also was shared with the New York Police Department's counterterrorism division and city transit officials, who concluded the sketch depicted Grand Central.

The material also included photographs, and a drawing of a private building in the city, which Kelly refused to identify. But an analysis found no indication of a terrorist plot, and authorities quickly decided there was no need to alert the public, he said.

"We didn't see it as a threatening piece of information," he said.

On Wednesday at Grand Central, security appeared to be at its usual high level, with National Guardsmen, law enforce-

ment officers carrying machine guns, and bomb-sniffing dogs.

"I'm used to this," said Elaine Weaver, a tourist from England who was passing through the station. "We're used to bomb scares everywhere. So you're careful but it doesn't deter me."

The NYPD's intelligence division studied the bombings in Madrid as a possible template for a New York attack. The department responded by tightening security in the subways and at train stations. Those measures were in place long before the city received word of the sketch.

"This is not something I think people should be panicked about or worried about," Mayor Michael Bloomberg said. "We took the appropriate steps and we do not think that in that particular case there was a real plan to attack Grand Central."

There were conflicting descriptions of what the drawing showed.

A Spanish police official said it depicted a facade similar to that of Grand Central, New York City and Daniel Wootli in Madrid contributed to this report.

The same Spanish police official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that the sketch was found in the home of Mouhammad Almallah, a Syrian arrested in Madrid on March 24. He was later released but is still considered a suspect.

Twenty-four people are in jail over the attack, and at least 40 others who were arrested and released are still considered suspects.

Associated Press Writers Verena Dobnik in New York City and Daniel Wootli in Madrid contributed to this report.

Rapist denied parole after victims testify

The Associated Press

SUFFIELD, Connecticut — A parole board Thursday rejected a rapist's bid to be released from the former jet-set fugitive who lived in Europe back to prison until 2008.

Alex Kelly, who was charged in 1986 with raping two teenagers while he was high school wrestling standout, was visibly angry after the ruling and demanded of the three-member board, "Why do you come here?"

Board members said they were moved by the pleas of Kelly's two victims, Adrienne Bak and Hill-

ary Buchanan, who sat together and fought back tears as they described Kelly's crimes.

"For 19 years, Adrienne and I have been trying to get justice for the brutal rapes this man committed against us," Buchanan said. "He left such an indelible mark on my soul."

Kelly, now 37, has spent eight years in prison, which his victims noted was slightly less than time he lived in Europe as a fugitive.

"I wish there was some way I could explain how sorry I am for what I have done," Kelly told the board.

"I take full responsibility for the things I have done. I have caused a lot of pain to a lot of people and I am sorry for that."

Just before his trial was to begin in 1987, Kelly fled the country. While in Europe, he spent time skiing and mountain climbing using money authorities say his wealthy parents sent him.

40 minutes off a building in downtown Los Angeles.

Neither was injured in the incident, which was broadcast throughout the United States.

Both workers had been wearing safety harnesses attached to the roof of the 12-story building.

Firefighters broke a window and helped them through it.

Jackson trial video

SANTA MARIA, California — Jurors in the Michael Jackson case got their first look Thursday at the singer's master bedroom suite where he allegedly molested a 13-year-old boy.

The panel was shown videotape from a Nov. 18, 2003, raid of Jackson's Neverland ranch that included shots of his cluttered bedroom, but none of the sexually explicit magazines that Santa Barbara County District Attorney Thomas Sneddon has said were found in the suite.

From wire reports



Members of the President's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform — from left, Liz Ann Sander, James Poterba, Chairman Connie Mack III and Vice-Chairman John Breaux — listen Thursday to Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan talk about revamping the complex tax code, an important goal of President Bush.

Greenspan floats idea of national consumption tax

Zippo upset by ban

PITTSBURGH — Zippo Manufacturing Co., which prides itself on its classic brass-and-chrome button lighters, says new air travel security regulations could cut into sales by as much as 30 percent.

"The U.S. Transportation Security Administration has announced it will ban butane, electric and absorbed fuel lighters aboard all aircraft and in areas behind airport security gates beginning in April. Zippo officials will meet with U.S. officials later this month to plead their case. Millions of the metal, rectangular lighters are bought on impulse at duty-free shops and at vacation spots as mementos.

Window washers saved

LOS ANGELES — Two window washers were rescued Thursday through a 10th-floor window after their scaffolding collapsed, leaving them dangling for about

BY JEANNINE AVERSA

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan on Thursday said some form of a consumption tax — such as a national sales tax — could spur greater economic growth, but he cautioned that the government would face significant problems making the transition to such a system.

Switching from an income tax to a consumption tax would generate huge opposition from Democrats, who argue that taxing food and other goods would fall hardest on the poor.

Acknowledging those concerns, Greenspan told the President's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform that policy-makers might want to consider a combination of an income tax and a consumption tax.

"I would suspect that probably that may be the best route to go. In other words, don't try for purity," Greenspan said in response to a question from a panelist. "I would suspect that the opposition that would arise would probably make such a structure [a pure consumption tax] infeasible."

Addressing concerns about increased taxes on food and other necessities, Greenspan said that policy-makers could design a consumption tax that would exclude products mostly consumed by the poor.

In his prepared remarks to the panel, the Fed chief said that a consumption tax would be best from the perspective of promoting economic growth "because it would encourage saving and the capital formation that the economy needs to expand and modernize."

"However, getting from the cur-

rent tax system to a consumption tax raises a challenging set of transition issues," he added.

Greenspan also said he supported tax incentives to encourage savings, despite what he called conflicting evidence about the incentives' success at increasing the national savings rate, because they enhance individuals' retirement accounts.

"And that, especially in the context of the discussions we've all been having the last couple weeks relevant to retirement funding and the like, is clearly something which is desirable," he said.

The Fed chief delivered his assessment to the panel a day after working aloud before a House committee about the buildup of budget deficits in recent years. The tax-reform panel is looking into ways to revamp the complex tax code, an important goal of President Bush.

CIA's Goss amazed by workload

The Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY, California — In a rare public appearance, CIA Director Porter Goss said he is overwhelmed by the many duties of his job, including devoting five hours out of every day to preparing for and delivering intelligence briefings to President Bush.

"The jobs I'm being asked to do, the five hats that I wear, are too much for this mortal," Goss said. "I'm a little amazed at the workload."

Goss praised Bush's choice for the new job of national intelligence director, John Negroponte. The career diplomat, who is expected to be confirmed by the Senate, will take over several of the duties currently assigned to Goss, including the presidential briefing.

Goss, who has made few public comments beyond congressional testimony, also said the legislation creating the position of director of national intelligence left him unclear on his future role.

"It's got a huge amount of ambiguity in it," he said. "I don't know by law what my direct relationship is with John Negroponte." Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld or other top officials involved with intelligence.



Mary Beth Brindley, left, and Evelyn Hall, who have been together for 45 years and were married on March 4, 2004, mark their first anniversary at home in Portland, Ore.

At first anniversary, gays have no regrets

Despite backlash, legally hazy marriage is a leap forward, say same-sex couples

BY RUKMINI CALLIMACHI

The Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Every morning before she headed out into the world, Evelyn Hall took off her gold ring and placed it on the kitchen counter. When she returned at night, she slipped it back on.

Last year, she put it on for good when she married the woman whom relatives had assumed was her roommate, cracking open the secret life she had hidden for 46 years.

A total of 2,968 couples wed in Oregon when the state's most populous county began issuing same-sex marriage licenses a year ago Thursday. Every one of those marriages is now in legal limbo — but gay couples say their legally hazy unions are nonetheless a giant leap forward.

"It was like an out-of-slavery experience. I know it sounds crazy, but we were so closeted," said Mary Beth Brindley, 65, who ran away from home to be with Hall, now 66, when she was 19. "It's a total relief not to have to lie anymore."

Gay weddings swept the country from coast to coast starting in San Francisco on Feb. 12, 2004, when

Mayor Gavin Newsom flung open the city's wedding registry to gay couples.

The movement jumped to Oregon in March, then New Mexico and New Paltz, N.Y. By May, thousands of gay couples were on their way to tying the knot in Massachusetts following a ruling by the state's highest court.

Then the backlash set in.

Last November, voters in Oregon and 10 other states passed ballot measures banning gay marriage. Voters in two other states, Missouri and Louisiana, banned gay marriages in 2004.

In Oregon and in California, lawsuits are wending their way through the state's legal machinery to determine the legal status of some 7,000 certificates issued to gay couples in the two states.

And while an effort to pass a federal ban on gay marriage failed in the Senate last year, supporters say they will try again in the new Congress.

Gay advocates contend time is on their side.

"It's a case of two steps forward for every one step back, which means we're still one step ahead," said Rebekah Kassell, spokeswoman for Basic Rights Oregon, the state's leading gay rights group.

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Cell phone accident

MIAMI — A man who fell 40 feet from a railroad bridge on to a concrete bridge spent more than two days calling for help before finally being discovered by a maintenance worker.

The man, whose name was not released by authorities, was in serious but stable condition at a hospital after being rescued Wednesday morning. Emergency workers hoisted him up to the foot of the drawbridge on a stretcher, said Fire Rescue spokesman Capt. Louie Fernandez.

The man, described as being in his 20s, told authorities he was out for a walk late Sunday night when he dropped his cell phone onto a ledge about five feet below the bridge walkway. As he leaned out to get the phone, the man said he lost his grip and fell to the platform.

Three slain at salon

BELLEVIEW, Ill. — Three people were found stabbed to death inside a beauty salon in this St. Louis suburb.

A customer who arrived for a midday Wednesday appointment found the bodies of the owner of Michael's Salon and two elderly sisters who were customers, police said.

Police Chief Terry Delaney identified the victims as Michael Cooney, 62, and sisters Dorey Bone, 82, and Doris Fischer, 79.

"Everybody's devastated," Mayor Mark Eckert said.

Calif. backs euthanasia

SACRAMENTO — A large majority of California residents support the idea of allowing terminally ill patients the option of taking their own life under the supervision of a physician, according to a new poll released Wednesday.

Consistent with surveys conducted over the last quarter century by the Field Poll, 70 percent of Californians support the idea that "incurably ill patients have the right to ask for and get life-ending medication." The poll found 22 percent opposed and eight percent were undecided.

The issue of physician-assisted suicide was first measured by the Field Poll in 1979, when 64 percent of Californians said the terminally ill should be allowed that opportunity. Since then, support for the concept has been consistent.

The survey was conducted among 503 adults during the 10-day period ending Feb. 17. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.1 percentage points.

Ex-spy cannot sue CIA

WASHINGTON — A former CIA spy who claims he defected to the United States lost their bid to sue the CIA on Wednesday in a Supreme Court case in which they contended the agency reneged on a pledge of lifetime support.

The possibility that an espionage relationship might be renege on that contract, the court concluded, because of the secret nature of their agreements.

Former spies cannot sue to enforce their contracts, the court concluded, because of the secret nature of their agreements.

From The Associated Press

States keep lid on mad cow probes

BY JON SARCHE

The Associated Press

DENVER, Colo. — When rumor hit the commodities trading firm in Chicago three years ago that Kansas cattle had contracted foot-and-mouth disease, prices plummeted.

A rumor that listed only a day cost the beef industry an estimated \$50 million and forced agriculture officials to spend weeks assuring consumers that the food supply was safe.

With this case and others like it in mind, lawmakers across the country are working on ways to keep livestock disease investigations secret until absolutely necessary. Proposals already have passed in Idaho and Wyoming, while lawmakers in Colorado, Maryland and Utah are considering bills this spring.

In Wyoming, false reporting of an animal disease outbreak is a crime. "There's just no reason to get consumers riled up about something that didn't happen," said Mel Coleman Jr., whose family founded Coleman Natural Products Inc., which sells beef from



A polled Hereford bull peers over the fence in the yards at the National Western Stock Show and Rodeo in Denver. When rumor of a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak among Kansas cattle hit the commodities trading firm in Chicago three years ago, prices plummeted.

ranches in Colorado and 12 other states.

But Jean Halloran, director of Consumers Union's Consumer Policy Institute in Yonkers, New York, said there are good reasons to fully disclose all information about testing for animal diseases — especially mad cow, the com-

mon name for bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE.

Humans who eat BSE-contaminated tissue can contract a degenerative, fatal brain disorder called variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease.

"In a disease as serious as this, we have to have complete open-

ness and transparency," she said.

However, Halloran also said keeping information secret until confirmation of an infection is an understandable step to protect the industry. That is somewhat more restrictive than how the U.S. Agriculture Department has handled public disclosure.

In December 2003, a few weeks after a Holstein in Washington state was screened for mad cow disease, the government said the animal had tested "presumptive positive." The government said a few days later the results had been confirmed in independent testing.

No more cases of the disease have been confirmed in the United States, though the government announced three times last year its preliminary rapid-test procedures had provided inconclusive results. That brought harsh criticism from some ranchers.

The preliminary tests for mad cow and some other diseases are designed to be conservative and provide a false positive if there's uncertainty to prompt further, more accurate testing, said Jim Miller, director of policy and initiatives for the Colorado Agriculture Department.



Law enforcement officials talk in an alley behind the home of U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkowitz as the investigation into the murder of her husband and mother continues in Chicago.

Chicago judge vows to return to bench

BY MIKE ROBINSON

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — A federal judge whose husband and mother were slain execution style in her basement is vowing to return to the bench, and police were searching for two "persons of interest" seen near the home.

Police released sketches of the two men, saying they want to interview them based on witness statements. One, a man in his mid-20s, was seen in a car near the home of Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkowitz. The other, a man in his 50s, was wearing dark overalls and a dark knit cap. Both are white.

In an interview published Thursday, the judge said she always knew her job could put her

at risk but never thought it would endanger her family. "I think we all sort of go into this thinking it's a possibility, but you don't think it's going to happen to you because it's so unthinkable," she said.

Lefkowitz, who is now in protective custody along with her four daughters, told the Chicago Sun-Times she will return to the bench. "Nobody is going to intimidate me off my duty," she said.



CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENTAP
Police sketches of murder suspects

cific suspects. The shootings came a month before white supremacist Matthew Hale was to be sentenced by another judge for soliciting an undercover FBI informant to murder Lefkowitz.

Lefkowitz had ordered Hale to change the name of his extremist group in a trademark lawsuit.

Rep. Fowler, leader on U.S. defense, dead at 62

BY RON WORD

The Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Former U.S. Rep. Tillie Fowler, who became prominent on defense issues during her four terms in Congress, died at a hospital, two days after suffering a brain hemorrhage. She was 62.

Fowler, who was known as the "Steel Magnolia" for her quiet tenacity in Congress, died at a hospital, said Tom Alexander, a family spokesman.

Gov. Jeb Bush called Fowler "a great Floridian and committed public servant. Congresswoman Fowler was a great leader and was dedicated to making the lives of Floridians better. She will be missed."

Fowler was elected to the House of Representatives in 1992, campaigning on an "eight years or term-limits pledge."

After leaving Congress in January 2001, she was nominated as a possible secretary of the Navy in the Bush administration, but instead joined the national law firm of Hollis & Knight.

Since 2003, Fowler was chairwoman of the Defense Policy Board, which advises Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. She also headed the committee that investigated alleged sexual assaults at the U.S. Air Force Academy and served on the committee that investigated the war in Iraq.

A native of Milledgeville, Ga., she was the daughter of former Georgia state Sen. Culver Kidd.

Cosby opens up to tabloid

BY NICOLE WEISENSE

EGAN

Knight Ridder

PHILADELPHIA — Bill Cosby has finally broken his silence about druging and groping allegations leveled against him by a former Temple University employee.

And he did it in an exclusive interview with the National Enquirer, offering a vague, sort-of apology to the 31-year-old Canadian woman.

"Looking back on it, I realize that words and actions can be misinterpreted by another person, and unless you're a supreme being, you can't predict what another individual will do," Cosby said in an interview with Enquirer Editor Barry Levine, in the March 14 issue, which hits newsstands on Friday.

While Cosby at first said he did not want to speculate whether the woman's motive was financial gain — "I don't want to go there" — he all but went there, anyway.

"I am not going to give in to people who try to exploit me because of my celebrity status," said Cosby, 67, who did not deny that he had been the woman's mentor.

"Sometimes you try to help people and it backfires on you and then they try to take advantage of you," Cosby said. "People can soil you by taking advantage."

Although Cosby has been cleared of any criminal charges, he said he was speaking out in anticipation of a civil suit the Canadian woman is expected to file against him shortly.

Cosby also commented on Tamara Green, a 57-year-old Californian



Cosby

"Sometimes you try to help people and it backfires on you and then they try to take advantage of you."

Bill Cosby

nia lawyer who said Cosby had drugged and groped her more than 30 years ago. She told her story first to the Philadelphia Daily News.

"My problem is with some media and how it appeared that Miss Green was allowed to be a 'wrecking ball,'" he told the Enquirer, admitting that her allegations intensified the scandal.

David Brokaw, Cosby's publicist, confirmed that Cosby's interview was legitimate.

Dolores Troian and Bebe Kivitz, the Canadian woman's attorneys, issued a brief statement.

"We are pleased that after Mr. Cosby's camp initially characterized our client's allegations as bizarre and utterly preposterous, he has acknowledged that it was his conduct after all that formed the basis for her allegations," they said.

Cosby's decision to speak to the supermarket tabloid, with which he has had a contentious relationship over the years, was unusual for a number of reasons. Five years ago he threatened a \$250 million lawsuit against the Enquirer and demanded a retraction of a story that claimed a then-20-year-old actress had accused him of sexual misconduct. Stuart Zakim, a spokesman for the Enquirer, declined to comment on whether Cosby had filed suit or whether the tabloid had retracted its story.

Ray Charles tapes seized from engineer

BY GEOFF BOUCHER

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — A recording engineer who worked for Ray Charles for two decades and who won four Grammys last month for his work on the late singer's

final album was arrested four days later after police pried open the door of his Burbank loft and found 300 original master recordings that belonged to Charles.

Terry Howard, 48, was in custody Wednesday after his arrest Feb. 17, but his attorney, Steve

Crom, said they would post bail Thursday.

A judge reduced it from \$1 million to \$100,000 this week.

"These are recordings that he contractually and logically had every right to have in his possession," Crom said. A recording engineer, he said, often works at home.

Los Angeles Police Detective Donald O. Hryciak said the boxes of recordings carted out of Howard's home, which consisted of a bed, refrigerator and other amenities in a commercial property in a recording industry district — were not digitally recorded discs brought home for tinkering.

The detective said the stacks of music included old reel-to-reel recordings of Charles and other artists whose work was stored in the singer's library.

"There were tapes that were stored in climate-controlled rooms at Ray Charles Enterprises, and they are so fragile that they need to be handled to be played or else they can be destroyed," Hryciak said. "When we got to them, some of them were mangled."

Jerry Digney, Charles' former publicist and spokesman for his estate, said in a statement: "Whatever the outcome, Ray Charles Enterprises puts a high value on its assets, especially its master tapes, and will do its utmost to ensure their safety and proper handling along with protecting other irreplaceable valuables belonging to the late entertainer and to his estate."

A source in the recording industry said Howard was "a guy they brought in when they needed him, a guy they trusted."



Rachel Robinson, widow of baseball great Jackie Robinson, stands with President Bush, left, and House Speaker Dennis Hastert, right, after she received the Congressional Gold Medal on his behalf at the Capitol on Wednesday in Washington.

Baseball great gets posthumous honor from lawmakers

BY ERICA WERNER

The Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — More than a half-century after breaking sport's color barrier, Jackie Robinson was posthumously awarded Congress' highest honor, a Congressional Gold Medal.

President Bush gave the medal to Robinson's widow, Rachel Robinson, on Wednesday in a state ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda. The Democratic and Republican leaders of the House and Senate

and baseball commissioner Bud Selig looked on.

"His story is one that shows what one person can do to hold America to account to its founding promise of freedom and equality," Bush said. "It's a lesson for people coming up to see."

"One person can make a big difference in setting the tone of this country."

When Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, he was the first black player on a major league team. He died in 1972 and his No. 42 was retired throughout baseball in 1997.

"This medal confirms what we know," Rachel Robinson said. "Jackie Robinson stands as a heroic role model for all Americans who believe in justice and equality."

Speakers extolled Robinson as a courageous athlete who suffered taunts and slurs from fans and fellow players, ignoring them as he proved both a brilliant ballplayer and a civil rights hero. The

latter role wasn't one he sought but it became inevitable after Dodgers owner Branch Rickey bucked much of popular opinion and signed him.

"He knew he was a symbol and a barrier-breaker, and that staying in the course would have consequences for millions of people to come," Rep. Mel Watt, D-N.C., chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, said.

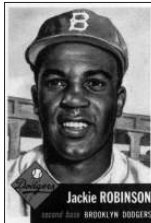
Robinson stayed the course, and excelled. He was rookie of the year in 1947, and was voted the league's Most Valuable Player in 1949 when he batted .342 and drove in 124 runs. He played 10 seasons with the Brooklyn Dodgers, often at second base.

He was elected to baseball's Hall of Fame in 1962.

Speakers at Wednesday's ceremony recalled hearing of Robinson's exploits or watching him play in their youth, proving once again that whatever ideological differences divide them, America's pastime rarely fails to unite the country's political leaders.

Bush said he had hoped for a Robinson baseball card as a kid, even though he rooted for the Giants. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., recalled going to a Cardinals game with his grandfather, and being told the Dodgers were playing and he would see history being made.

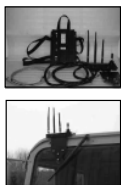
Robinson is only the second major league baseball player ever to get the Congressional Gold Medal — the first was Roberto Clemente in 1973.



SINIS

Jackie Robinson was No. 1 for Topps in 1953. He was the first black player on a major league baseball team and was elected to baseball's Hall of Fame in 1962.

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Perpetuating the stigma

The shootings at Fort Bragg, N.C., in early February are a reminder of the four wives who were killed by their husbands at Fort Bragg in 2002, three of those four husbands having recently returned from Afghanistan.

Part of the Pentagon's plan to prevent domestic violence upon the return of divisions from Iraq and Afghanistan is to reduce the stigma of mental health care for troops needing and seeking it ("Overcoming stigma, dealing with trauma," article, Feb. 5).

Col. Thomas Burke, one of the Pentagon's top psychologists, says, "There is a perception among the troops that seeking mental health care means

you're weak or a coward and frankly, we in the military kind of foster that attitude."

Certainly, Lt. Gen. James Mattis has perpetuated that stigma when he told a group in San Diego recently that "it's quite fun to fight 'em, you know. It's a hell of a boot. It's fun to shoot some people."

If a three-star general has no compunction about expressing his cavalier attitude toward war in a public forum, what are the chances subordinates in need of mental health care will seek it upon their return from a war zone?

Our Pentagon appears to be functioning at cross-purposes.

Michele Winter
Würzburg, Germany

Baumhoder holds heroes near, dear

BY CORA A. METZ

Recently, I visited Baumhoder, Germany, respectfully nicknamed "The Rock" and home of the 1st Armored Division. On the two-lane highway leading there, I noticed an old sign posted on the guardrail to my left. The sign read, "Getting warmer." Puzzled, I had no clue as to what those words meant until I saw another sign a short distance ahead. In the middle of a field, a large white cloth draped over a rolled bale of hay, "Welcome home, SSG Santiago." These two signs were only small indicators of what was to follow.

Approaching the gate, I admired more homemade signs, particularly the patriotic ones in red, white and blue paint, that welcomed home the battle-weary troops who had recently returned from Iraq. Once on foot, I marveled at sturdy trees standing at attention, proudly boasting yellow ribbons and bows fastened sporadically around their trunks. Various-sized yellow bows as far as my eyes could see were tacked to just about every visible nook and cranny. Several fences and sides of buildings bore more hand-painted signs, which the troops could not possibly have missed as they rolled in that day. I was proud of that.

Wanting to do a little shopping, I stood in a long line leading to the ATM near the PX. In line ahead of me stood two soldiers in BDUs and three in civvies. I could tell the ones in civvies were soldiers too as I unintentionally overheard bits and pieces of their conversations about being back home, the things they had done or planned to do. These young soldiers, looking barely out of their teens, bore skin with deep tans as if they had spent too much time basking in the sun on some beautiful tropical beach. However, Iraq was no day at anyone's beach. I felt sad about that.

As I reached the ATM, the post speakers came to life with the familiar crisp bugle notes, which signaled retreat to lower the flag and end the duty day. Seemingly, a special reverent hush fell over the area, for

that this traditional ceremony had taken on a new meaning, especially for these young men. Those in line ahead of me snapped around sharply to face the source of the music. I turned too and a panoramic view of the parking lot revealed even more patriotism. Soldiers in either BDUs or desert camos readied themselves to pay their respect to our flag.

On the road in front of the PX, a few cars had stopped; their drivers had stepped out onto the street ready to do the right thing to the flag too. Nearby, I noticed a young toddler of about 2 standing next to her dad in uniform, proudly looking up at him and probably wondering what she should do. The contest her tiny fingers with his left hand and stared straight ahead, just as her dad did as he prepared to salute with his right hand. That touched me.

As the bugle continued with the second part of the color guard slowly lowered the flag, everyone that I could see stood still, some with a salute, others with their hands over their hearts, honoring the flag as it descended to the soldiers' waiting hands. When retreat ended, drivers stepped back in their cars and awakened their engines to continue their journeys. The soldiers and others resumed their pace through the parking lot to their intended destinations.

Finished with my shopping, I headed home but, at the last minute, decided to ride down the street near the theater to view more of what welcomed the soldiers on the day they returned.

The fence surrounding the track behind the theater held even more signs: "We love you, 1-6 INF." "You are our heroes, 2-6 INF." "Welcome home, 1-45" and so on. More yellow bows and ribbons on a chain-link fence filled spaces between the signs.

Near the fence stood a group of fresh-faced young men with that unmistakable "Iraqi" tan. As I slowly drove by, I noticed that they were laughing and talking among themselves. One quickly puffered repeatedly and nervously on a cigarette. Others



IGNACIO RIBERA/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Sp. Jesse D. Lunsard, a member of the 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, gets a tearful welcome home from his family in Baumhoder, Germany, in July.

ers punctuated their conversations with animated hand gestures and brotherly hugs. Even from my car, I sensed their lingering uneasiness, yet they seemed relieved to be back on "The Rock." "I was happy for them too."

As I turned toward the traffic circle to head off post, I saw a lone soldier jogging in his gray and black PT uniform. As he approached the crosswalk ahead of me, I stopped to let him pass so that he would not break his stride. That is when it all came together for me. My heart filled with both pride and sorrow.

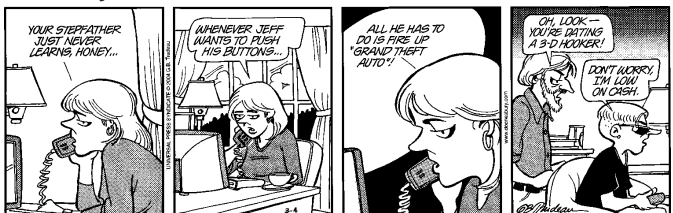
I felt profoundly proud of these soldiers who served so bravely and had returned safely to enjoy this extremely well-deserved heroes' welcome home. A deep sadness overwhelmed me as my thoughts turned to the soldiers who never made it back.

With my heart full, I cried as I drove away. So I say to each of you on "The Rock" and to all our soldiers who have returned safely: I salute you for a superb job extremely well done.

Army Sp. 1st Class Cora A. Metz (retired) is force protection officer and security manager for General Support Center, Europe.

Doonesbury Flashbacks

BY GARRY TRUDEAU



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OPINION

Initiative needs more than show of good faith

Chicago Tribune

As far back as his 2000 campaign, President Bush made government partnerships with religious organizations a centerpiece of his "compassionate conservative" approach to social welfare programs.

The idea of faith-based initiatives has a lot of appeal, as long as public funds aren't used for religious proselytizing. It is an opportunity to put work in the hands of local people who know their communities best.

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives boasts that hundreds of millions of dollars are flowing to religiously affiliated organizations that provide food banks, drug treatment, job training, homeless shelters, counseling centers, after-school programs for children and other services.

But some questions have been raised about how committed the administration really is to this. Two former top officials of the office say the efforts have been far less than promised.

David Kuo, who resigned as deputy director of the office in December 2003, says that the administration regarded great political benefits from a "minimal" commitment to the faith-based agenda and provided no more than "a whisper of what was promised" by Bush.

The administration promised to seek \$6.8 billion for the efforts in his first term, but the programs have received only \$500 million, Kuo said in an essay on *Beliefnet.org*, an independent Web site for discussion of religious issues.

That's not entirely Bush's fault. Con-

gress balked at the president's proposed "charitable choice" tax incentive, which would have provided a tax break for charitable contributions made by people who don't itemize their federal tax deductions. That worthy idea might have unleashed billions of dollars in new donations to worthy programs. "Republicans were indifferent to the poor and the Democrats were allergic to faith," Kuo wrote. He blamed the White House for failing to bring political pressure to pass the tax measure. "From tax cuts to Medicare, the White House gets what the White House really wants," he wrote. "It never really wanted the poor people stuff."

Kuo's criticism echoes comments made by John J. Dillillo Jr., who resigned in 2001 after only seven months as the first director of the office of faith-based initiatives. A year after his departure, Dillillo charged in an interview with *Esquire* that "Mayberry Machiavellians" in the White House put politics ahead of the office's compassionate service mission.

It seems that Bush did back away from the "charitable choice" effort in 2001, say-cut legislation and enacted some scaled-down faith-based initiatives on his own. Little effort has been made to revive the tax proposal. Funding for the office of faith-based initiatives has been flat, Kuo pointed out, while other domestic priorities have been given increases.

Responding to Kuo's comments, a White House spokesman said that Bush remains committed to push faith-based initiatives in the second term.

Presidents have to make choices, and there's no doubt that Bush's efforts to pro-



vide federal support to religious organizations met considerable resistance in Congress from the get-go. It remains, though, an intriguing and worthwhile idea. Perhaps in a second term, the White House can demonstrate some success in the early, limited efforts of the office of faith-based initiatives, to build more support in Congress.

Thousands of local social service programs are getting a welcome federal boost that they might otherwise not have received.

Community-based programs, armed and energized by their personal attachment to

their neighborhoods, tend to do a better and more efficient job than government does of understanding and meeting the needs of the people they serve.

The president's open and honest discussion of faith, and his efforts to support faith-based organizations, undoubtedly contributed to a noticeable improvement in his support from those who attend church services regularly, including black and Latino voters. He showed that it's good policy and good politics.

Faith-based programs should be given a chance to show how much good work they can do. Washington should try to help them do it, instead of standing in the way.

With longer deployments, military path a harder sell

BY JULES WITCOVER
Tribune Media Services

WASHINGTON
I n documentary filmmaker Michael Moore's controversial "Fahrenheit 9/11" last year, one of the most telling movie scenes showed Marine Corps recruiters trying to persuade unemployed young men in Moore's hometown of Flint, Mich., to sign up, with little success.

Just the other night, on the BBC World nightly television newscast, the scene was repeated by National Guard recruiters seeking to get young African-American men in Alabama to do the same, with similar results. One of the young men said flat-out that he wanted no part of an enlistment that might put him in Iraq to get shot at and maybe killed.

A common reaction these days, as military recruiters are hard-pressed to find youths willing to sign on the dotted line, even with the enticement of bonuses that run as high as \$15,000 for new recruits and \$35,000 for re-enlistment of combat veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Marines have been particularly hard hit, having failed to miss their monthly recruiting quota for the first time in nearly 10 years.

One reason may be, as reported in The New York Times, that the Marine Corps, which constitutes 21 percent of the 150,000 American forces in Iraq, has sustained 31 percent of the U.S. fatalities, as of last Friday standing at 1,480.

The Marines are also suffering a higher rate of suicides — a 29 percent increase last year, according to the Marine Corps commandant, Gen. Michael W. Hagee. All of the 31 Marine Corps were committed by enlistment, most of them not older than 25, and another 83 attempted suicide, according to The Washington Post.

Hagee indicated at a breakfast meeting with reporters the other day that while most of the suicides were not by Marines who had served in Iraq, the rates of suicides of deployments resulting from manpower demands of the war and other U.S. global obligations had taken their toll.

The Marine recruiting experience is being duplicated by the Army and National Guard units in the States, which have also seen a sharp drop-off in recruitment. The Army, which last year had more than 5,200 recruiters seeking enlistees, has added 800 more to drum up new soldiers.

Another major factor in the difficulty of keeping the volunteer Army and particularly the National Guard up to strength has been the uncertainty of tours of duty, as shortages of certain skilled soldiers and interests of maintaining unit cohesion have

produced extensions of service and in overseas assignments.

The disruptions of family life among National Guardsmen who did not anticipate long overseas separations, let alone facing combat, have generated much apprehension and complaining among family members left behind, as well as from the soldiers themselves.

LT. Gen. H. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, told the House Armed Services Committee last month that the Guard was "woefully under-equipped before the war started" and is supplying more than 40 percent of the combat forces in Iraq. Recruitment had fallen to 30 percent of its goals, requiring a large boost in bonuses.

As a result of the manpower demands of the Iraq war, the Guard has moved a great distance from its former role as a home-defense force often called out to deal with do-

mestic disasters from floods to earthquakes and only occasional tasks of coping with street unrest and riots.

During the Vietnam War, the Guard had few enlistment problems, as young Americans facing the draft vied for available slots as a haven against possible service under fire in Southeast Asia. That clearly is not the case today, when chances of overseas deployment are high and extensions of tours, labeled by critics as a "backdoor draft," have made recruitment a major Pentagon headache.

As the American engagement in Iraq approaches its third year in three weeks, with no projections from the administration about when it will end, the U.S. armed forces are in an uncommon state of disarray.

And those determined military fishers of men dispatched to the nation's working-class neighborhoods are finding it ever harder to bring in an adequate catch.

Mallard Fillmore



"Diversity":

Highly prized condition, featuring ethnic, racial, national and gender heterogeneity, while preserving ideological purity.



BY BRUCE TINSLEY

IN THE WORLD

Trial begins for pedophilia ring in France

BY VERENA VON DERSCHAU
The Associated Press

ANGERS, France — Sixty-six people were accused of participating in a pedophilia ring in which children and babies were prostituted for food and small sums of money Thursday as one of France's biggest trials got under way.

Prosecutors contend that dozens of children — ages 6 months to 14 years — were raped by their parents or offered to other adults for sex from 1999 to 2002.

Some of the 45 victims, who are now in the care of social services, were expected to testify by closed-circuit television. The children will not appear in court.

Authorities were offering psychological counseling to the jurors and six judges to help them

cope with sordid testimony of child abuse and gang rape expected during the about four-month trial, to be held in a specially built courtroom in Angers.

Many of the defendants are from low-income households in the working class Saint-Leonard neighborhood of Angers, and some were themselves reportedly abused as children.

Three couples at the center of the prostitution ring lured their children and those of their relatives "to play doctor" with the adults, the newspaper Le Monde reported. One young girl was allegedly raped 45 times.

Defense lawyers planned to argue that government social workers, who were monitoring many of the suspects, failed in their responsibilities or turned a blind eye to signs of abuse. Some

of the defendants cited in the 420-page legal filing are illiterate and don't fully understand the charges against them, lawyers said.

Thirty-nine people face up to 30 years in prison if convicted of raping minors under age 15 and on prostitution charges. Other suspects face up to 10 years in prison if convicted of sexual violence against minors and failure to denounce crimes.

"To my knowledge, we've never seen a criminal case of this magnitude in France," said Pascal Rouiller, a defense lawyer for five suspects. Others thought to have participated in the ring while hiding their identities behind masks are believed to still be at large.

The children speak of one tattooed woman who is not in the defendants' dock," Rouiller said.



An unidentified defendant, right, is brought by a police officer to the courthouse in Angers, western France, on Thursday, where 66 people went on trial for allegedly prostituting children for food and money. It is one of the biggest criminal trials ever in France.

Anti-Syrian sentiment on the rise

BY BASSEM MROUE
The Associated Press

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Syrian taxi driver Mohammed Toja has been ferrying passengers between Beirut and Damascus for 12 years. But he is reconsidering working here amid the soaring anti-Syrian sentiment that's followed last month's assassination of Lebanon's former prime minister.

Two days after a massive bomb killed Rafik Hariri and 17 others in Beirut, Toja's Dodge — its bright yellow color marking it as a Syrian taxi — was damaged when people on an overpass dropped a motorcycle battery onto it.

And during a recent breakfast, angry young men warned him to leave the neighborhood or his car would be attacked again.

"If things continue this way, I probably will stop coming to Lebanon," said the 38-year-old, standing with fellow Syrian drivers near Charles Helou Station, Beirut's main stop for taxis driving between Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

Toja is like hundreds of thousands of Syrian workers — mainly farmers and construction workers — lured to Lebanon by the promise of higher pay. But their numbers have noticeably dwindled since some have become targets after Hariri's death, which many Lebanese blame on Syria and their own country's pro-Damascus authorities.

Despite official Syrian and Lebanese denials, anti-Syrian sentiment has reached fever pitch throughout this country. Massive anti-Syrian protests brought Lebanon's parliament to Damascus, government and calls are intensifying for the withdrawal of Syria's 15,000 troops based here.



Militant Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir waves from inside a detention truck as he leaves court after his trial in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Thursday. The court sentenced Bashir to 30 months in prison for conspiracy in the 2002 Bali bombings, but cleared him of three more serious charges, including ordering the attack.

Cleric gets 2½ years in Bali bombings

BY CHRIS BRUMMITT
The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — The alleged leader of a militant Islamic group was sentenced Thursday to 2½ years in prison for conspiracy in the 2002 Bali nightclub bombings that killed 202 people but was cleared of more serious charges. The United States and Australia criticized the sentence.

A five-judge panel cleared Abu Bakar Bashir of allegations that as head of the al-Qaida-linked Jemaah Islamiyah group he planned the 2002 suicide bombing of the J.W. Marriott hotel in Jakarta that killed 12 people and that he incited his followers to launch terror attacks.

The 66-year-old preacher could be released from prison by late 2006 with time already served in prison taken into account.

Bashir had faced a maximum penalty of death over the Marriott charge, but most analysts had predicted his punishment would

be far less — partly due to a weak case by prosecutors. During the five-month trial, only one witness directly testified that Bashir headed Jemaah Islamiyah, the group blamed in both attacks.

**“I’m being
oppressed by
people from
abroad and at
home.”**

Abu Bakar Bashir
after being sentenced

"I'm being oppressed by people from abroad and at home," Bashir said after the verdict, surrounded by hundreds of cheering supporters. "They consider Islamic law to be a shackle and are slaves to immoral behavior. Allah, open their hearts or destroy them."

"Smash America and its lack-

eys," shouted one supporter.

Both sides said they would consider appealing the verdict, with Bashir's lawyers calling the sentence politically motivated. Bashir and his supporters have repeatedly claimed that Jakarta was under pressure from the United States to find him guilty.

The United States and Australia, which lost seven and 88 citizens respectively in the attack on Bali tourist nightclubs, consider Bashir the spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiyah and were hoping for a lengthy prison term to deter terrorism in the world's most populous Muslim nation.

"We respect the independence and judgment of the Indonesian courts," U.S. Embassy spokesman Max Kwak said. "But given the gravity of the charges on which he was convicted, we are disappointed at the length of the sentence."

"We'd have liked a longer sentence," Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said.

Tons of hashish found

THESSALONIKI, Greece — Police seized 4.5 metric tons of hashish after raiding a warehouse in this northern port city, authorities said Thursday.

Three men from Bulgaria were arrested during the raid late Wednesday by police and Finance Ministry fraud officers at the warehouse in the outskirts of Thessaloniki.

U.N. urges nuke talks

VIENNA, Austria — The U.N. atomic watchdog agency urged North Korea on Thursday to return to six-party negotiations over its nuclear program — and to let the agency return to monitoring its atomic activities.

The threat represented by North Korea is "a serious challenge... to peace and stability in Northeast Asia," and to attempts to control the global spread of nuclear weapons, the board of the 35-nation International Atomic Energy Agency said in a statement Thursday.

In a separate attempt to defuse the North Korea threat, top U.S. and Chinese officials agreed Thursday in Seoul on tactics meant to lure Pyongyang back to multiparty talks on nuclear disarmament.

Abortion amendment

UNITED NATIONS — The United States hinted strongly that it will drop controversial amendments regarding abortion from the final declaration of a high-level U.N. meeting to advance the fight for women's equality.

The U.S. government has come under intense pressure from the European Union and some countries over its demand to add language to the declaration stating that the landmark platform adopted 10 years ago at the U.N. women's conference in Beijing does not create a "right to abortion."

From The Associated Press

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Bizarre goat trade

PA MOUNT PLEASANT — Four men stole, killed and butchered a goat so they could trade its meat for crack cocaine, police said.

Authorities charged the four men with theft, receiving stolen property, cruelty to animals, and criminal conspiracy on Tuesday for the Dec. 24 incident in Bullskin Township, about 35 miles southeast of Pittsburgh.

James Walter Albright, 37, dragged the 4-year-old pygmy goat from its pen with a rope and tied the animal to a shrub, where he and Charles W. Smith Jr., 20, killed the animal by beating its head with a hammer or a steel pipe, police said.

The men then took the goat to Smith's residence, where his father, Charles W. Smith, 48, and Gilbert Wesley Fisch, 38, skinned the animal and cut it up, police said.

8 years for fatal crash

HI HONOLULU — A highway racer who caused a fatal traffic accident was sentenced in Circuit Court to eight years in prison.

Nicholas Tudisco, 21, pleaded no contest in November to manslaughter for the death of Elizabeth Kekoa, 58, a teacher at Holy Trinity School.

Tudisco had admitted he was going more than 100 miles per hour in the H-1 freeway in August 2001 when his car crashed into Kekoa's van.

Kekoa's husband, Wally, who was driving the van, and her mother, Rose Davis, were also injured in the crash. Tudisco was not hurt.

Home had border tunnel

CA SAN DIEGO — U.S. and Mexican authorities investigating a cross-border tunnel found the entrance in a middle-class residence in Mexicali, Mexico, and believe the passage ends about 100 yards north in a residential area of Calexico.

It was the third tunnel discovered in the area in 15 months. Authorities suspect the tunnel was used to ferry drugs across the border.

The 3-by-5-foot passage, which started in a back bedroom of the Mexicali home, is equipped with ventilation and lighting systems, and lined with wood beams for support. Outside the entrance, a closed-circuit camera system provided security, Mexican authorities said.

The residence was found abandoned, and no arrests have been made.

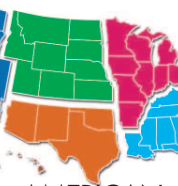
Limits on beach surreys

VA VIRGINIA BEACH — The city is considering limits on the gawky, pedal-powered surreys that tourists ply along the resort's beach front.

The four-wheel tourist-mobility has grown from 10 in 1998 to more than 170 today. There are about 28 rental establishments in the resort. City officials want to limit the number of surreys to five per operator, for a total of 140, and charge a \$100 annual fee for each surrey.

For police, it's a matter of public safety.

Loaded with four to six adults, surreys can easily top 1,000 pounds. "They can get a lot of mo-



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

mentum," said police Capt. Dennis Free, who was smacked by a surfer on his rounds last summer.

"We're seeing enough minor incidents that we want to get some intervention before something major happens."

Toddler missing in river

TX EAGLE PASS — Authorities on both sides of the border were trying to find a 20-month-old boy who fell into the Rio Grande while being carried across the river from Mexico.

The toddler and his mother were part of a group of six undocumented immigrants crossing the river near Eagle Pass. Border Patrol agents heard the woman's cries.

"Her 1½-year-old boy had slipped into the current as they crossed. Someone was carrying him, and the current was too much. He lost his grip on the child," said Dennis Smith, a Border Patrol spokesman.

U.S. agents have been searching by ground and air, along with Mexican emergency crews.

Pharmacist's refusal

WI MADISON — A Roman Catholic pharmacist who blocked a woman's attempt to fill a prescription for birth control pills should be reprimanded and required to attend ethics classes, a judge ruled.

Administrative Law Judge Colleen Baird recommended the punishment for Neil Nosen of St. Paul, Minn., who said it would be a sin under his religion to provide a contraceptive.

He refused in July 2002 to fill



Heels over head

Patrick Dabrowski, 6, falls out of his sled while enjoying a snow day from school in Bristol, Conn.

the woman's prescription himself or transfer it to another pharmacy.

Krystal Williams-Oby, said Wisconsin law does not address the issue, nor do state rules established by the Pharmacy Examining Board.

Baird noted that state rules prohibit pharmacists from engaging in practices that could be a "danger to the health, welfare or safety of a patient or public." Baird found Nosen put the woman at risk of an unwanted pregnancy through his actions.

The judge's recommendation goes to the pharmacy board.

Settlement in mice suit

MD BALTIMORE — An Indiana company has agreed to pay \$7.2 million to settle all claims it supplied researchers on aging with genetically modified mice that did not have the traits promised.

Federal prosecutors said Tuesday that Harlan, Sprague, Dawley Inc. of Indianapolis supplied the mice under contract to the National Institute of Aging, based in Bethesda, Md.

The exact nature of the research and the specific traits that the laboratory mice were supposed to have were not disclosed.

Sign-wearing sentence

FL ORLANDO — If drivers can't read Erik Rivera's sign, they might be going too fast.

Rivera used to speed and street race on late nights through south Orange County. Now he goes at a slower pace, wearing a sign: "Don't Street Race. I Lost my Drivers License for 3 Years."

Orange Circuit Judge John H. Adams Sr. ordered 24-year-old Rivera, of Kissimmee, to wear the sandwich-board sign as a deterrent to other racers.

Rivera was arrested in June and convicted in November of fleeing and eluding deputies and resisting law enforcement without violence.

Rivera will wear the 2-foot-by-3-foot sign for 50 consecutive Sundays from 1 a.m. to 2 a.m., when other young people are out racing. He must also pay for the sign and attend a special driving school.

Escapee faces charges

ME LEWISTON — A 17-year-old escapee from the Long Creek Youth Development Center faces a charge of attempted murder in the weekend shooting of a Lewiston man through the window of his first-floor apartment, police said.

The shooting victim, Tyler Morin, 19, was listed in stable condition at Central Maine Medical Center, where he was being treated for gunshot wounds to the chest and shoulder.

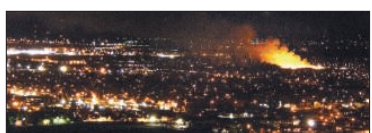
Twenty minutes after Morin died 911 early Sunday to report the shooting, a Sagadahoc County sheriff's deputy spotted the suspect in a vehicle in Topsham and pulled it over. The youth fled into a wooded area, said Lewiston Police Sgt. Michael McGonagle.

McGonagle said the boy was eventually returned to the South Portland youth center, from which he had escaped Oct. 30. In addition to attempted murder, he faces charges of burglary of a motor vehicle, eluding police and escape.



Wicked big lobster

Bubba, left, a 23-pound lobster pulled from the waters off Nantucket, Mass., is shown next to an average lobster (1.5 pounds) at Wholey's Fish Market in Pittsburgh. The big crustacean, probably 30 to 50 years old, was to get a landlocked home, but he died in Pittsburgh Zoo's quarantine area. The cause of death was probably stress from the move, officials said.



Burning brightly

A fire in Billings, Mont., is seen from three miles away. An unattended living facility under construction was destroyed by the fire. Two townhouses were severely damaged. Fire Marshal Frank Odermann said it will be quite a while before they can determine what caused the blaze.



Leapin' lizards! He's good!

Ben Gregory, 12, hops through some tricks on a pogo stick to impress his friends after school in Granite City, Ill.



Giant tortoise rescued Wyoming Game and Fish Department herpetological coordinator Bill Turner takes photos and measurements of a giant tortoise east of Cheyenne, Wyo. The reptile, an unlikely visitor to Wyoming, was found near a road by Terri Smith. She was walking her dog. Smith's husband, Ken Smith, brought the tortoise back to their home until Game and Fish could examine it. They told the Smiths it probably was a desert tortoise, native to the Southwest.



Dressed for the weather A dog named Tyson of Brookline, Mass., looks pretty sulky about wearing a raincoat while walking with his owner, Fatima Fatal, in Brookline, Mass.



Sending it soaring Kersh Peterson, a sophomore at Clemson University, takes a break from studies to help his friend, Daniel Craft, launch his stunt kite on Kite Hill in Clemson, S.C.



Think he's confused? An American robin feeds on berries in a tree near Ann Arbor, Mich., on a snowy day. Traditionally, robins are the harbingers of spring, but Wednesday's forecast calls for scattered snow showers.

No pay, no homework

CA BERKELEY — Students in the Berkeley school district aren't getting written homework assignments because teachers are refusing to grade work on their own time after two years without a pay raise.

"Teachers do a lot with a little. All of a sudden, a lot of things that they do are just gone. It's demoralizing," said Rachel Baker, who has a son in kindergarten.

The action was organized by the Berkeley Federation of Teachers, which wants a cost-of-living increase next year.

District Superintendent Michele Lawrence expressed sympathy for the teachers but said there isn't money for raises. She blamed Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger not providing as much money to education as promised.

Chicken fights busted up

GA CLARKESVILLE — Authorities arrested 33 people after busting a chicken fight.

The Habersham County sheriff's office received an anonymous tip that a fight was being held. Officers arrived about 100 people fled the venue, described by Sheriff DeRay Fincher as a "full-fledged operation," where bleachers were set up and spectators were charging admission.

The Department of Agriculture and the Department of Natural Resources took custody of the chickens after no one stepped forward to claim the live animals, which had to be separated to prevent them from fighting.

Hypnotist accused

CT MILFORD — A British hypnotist charged with having sex with patients under his spell and secretly videotaping the encounters was sentenced Monday to 90 days in prison and fines possible deportation to England.

Michael Johnstone, 64, had pleaded no contest to reckless endangerment and breach of peace. As part of a plea deal, he received three years in prison with all but 90 days suspended. He will not have to register as a sex offender or attend sex therapy.

Authorities said Johnstone confessed to having sex and videotaping the trysts with a half-dozen patients who came to him for anxiety treatment. The incidents allegedly occurred between 2000 and 2003.

Prosecutors said immigration officials are investigating and may detain Johnstone after his sentence.

Beating by cops alleged

WI MILWAUKEE — Three police officers were charged in the beating of a man outside a house party in what witnesses have called a racially motivated attack.

Witnesses said about 10 people surrounded Frank Jude Jr., beat him and kicked him in the head while holding his arms behind his back when he was face down in the street.

According to claims filed against the city by Jude and others, the white officers — Jon Bartlett, Daniel L. Masarik and Andrew R. Spengler — used racial slurs as they attacked Jude, who is black.

The three officers, who all remain suspended with pay, were re-

leased after posting \$5,000 bail each.

Search for arsonist

DC WASHINGTON — Investigators on Tuesday upped the ante in their search for a serial arsonist.

They nearly tripled the reward — from \$35,000 to \$100,000 — for information leading to an arrest and conviction of the person behind more than 40 fires.

The arrests began March 8, 2003, in the District of Columbia.

Since then, there have also been cases in Prince George's and Montgomery counties in Maryland, and Fairfax County and the city of Alexandria in Virginia. The most recent was Dec. 10 in Northeast Washington.

Forty-five fires and one attempted arson are linked to the suspect. A Northeast Washington fire on June 5, 2003 — one of two that day — killed an elderly woman.

Taser sparks criticism

CO AURORA — Police found themselves in the crosshairs of public criticism after officers used a Taser stun gun to subdue a man accused of pilfering from a salad bar at a Chuck E. Cheese's pizzeria packed with families and young children.

"They beat this man in front of all these kids, then Tased him in my sister's lap," said witness Felicia Mayo, who was at the establishment with her 7-year-old son. "They had no regard for the effect this would have on the kids. This is Chuck E. Cheese, you know."

Police responded to Chuck E. Cheese's after a manager complained that a patron had refused to show proof that he had paid for food.

Church, school vandalism

CA DAVIS — Swastikas, racist graffiti and satanic messages were spray-painted on two schools and a church, stunning members of this liberal college town and sparking a multiagency hate-crimes investigation.

"I'm just so sickened by what's happened," said Mayor Ruth Asmundson.

The vandalism occurred less than two years after the city and its school district held a series of emotional public meetings over hate crimes committed by a few of the city's youths. At the meetings, dozens of students and local residents described acts of bigotry and racism in the community that they believed were being ignored by local officials.

Dolphin release

FL PORT ST. LUCIE — Bashful, Sleepy and Sneezey — three of the 37 rough-toothed dolphins that beached themselves on the Florida coast in August — are heading home.

Officials with Mote Marine Laboratory, where the three dolphins survived hurricanes and the deaths of four pod mates, plan to release the deep-sea animals in the Atlantic Ocean.

The release is the culmination of efforts by scores of veterinarians and volunteers who fought to keep the stranded dolphins alive after they were found in the surf just south of the St. Lucie Nuclear Plant.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

Designer gives birth

Designer Stella McCartney and her husband have named their infant son.



McCartney

Miller Alasdair James Willis was born Friday in London, weighing 7 pounds, 7 ounces, to McCartney, the daughter of Paul McCartney, and her husband, Alasdair Willis, People magazine said Tuesday.

Willis, a former magazine publisher, and McCartney, 33, were married in August 2003. It is the couple's first child.

Stamos marriage is over

The marriage between Rebecca Romijn and John Stamos is officially over. Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Harvey A. Silberman signed off on the family law judgment Thursday, nearly a year after the couple announced they were separated after five years of marriage.

The marriage was officially terminated as of Tuesday, according to the document. The couple have no children.

Romijn, 32, is filming "Man About Town" with Ben Affleck. Her screen credit includes "Rollerball" and "Femme Fatale." Stamos, 41, starred on television's "Full House" from 1987 to 1995. He has a new ABC comedy, "Jake in Progress."

Berry stalker faces court

A judge in Santa Monica, Calif., issued a three-year restraining order against a man who allegedly sent threatening letters to Halle Berry's home.

Superior Court Judge Linda K. Lefkowitz ruled that Robert Sawyer of San Pablo, about 15 miles northeast of San Francisco, was to stay 100 yards away from Berry and to keep the same distance from her home, work and vehicle.

The order, which expires in 2008, also prohibits him from contacting the actress by phone, mail or e-mail.

Berry wasn't in court Monday when the judge made her decision.

Court records filed on Berry's behalf ear-

lier this month claim Sawyer's letters talk about "delusions he has about a purported romantic relationship [with the actress]."

Sawyer was contacted by Berry's personal security in November advising him not to reach the actress anymore. But Sawyer sent more letters to Berry, including one that said he would visit her on Valentine's Day "to fulfill his delusions of a romantic relationship."

Chaka Khan's son charged

The son of R&B singer Chaka Khan surrendered to police after he learned that prosecutors had charged him with murder in the shooting death of a 17-year-old boy, police said.

Damien Patrick Holland, 25, surrendered Monday with his lawyers at his side, according to a printed LAPD statement.

He is being held on \$2 million bail.

Prosecutors allege that Holland shot Christopher Bailey of Los Angeles at a September 2004 party as the two struggled for a gun during a fight.

Khan, 51, is known for hits such as "Tell Me Something Good" and "I Feel for You."

More money from 'Rings'

Peter Jackson's production company used New Line Cinema on claims it has been shortchanged on profits from the first film in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

Wingnut Films alleges in a federal lawsuit filed Monday in Los Angeles that New Line and subsidiary Katja Motion Pictures failed to properly calculate revenue, including revenue from DVD sales, from 2001's "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring."

The lawsuit doesn't specify an amount sought in damages but claims the movie grossed more than \$314 million in box office receipts in the United States and more than \$556 million overseas, plus revenue from video and merchandise sales.

A phone call to a New Line spokesman, wasn't immediately returned late Monday.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



Jackson

Mirah's instant gratification

Singer-songwriter won't let business interfere with creativity

BY DAN DELUCA

Knight Ridder Newspapers

MIRAH YOM TOV Zeitlyn is picking at her granola, talking about what it was like when she started writing songs, and what it's like now. "You know how little kids, when you watch them, they pick their noses and do amazing drawings and take off their pants and pee in their pants and nothing is really that big of a deal?"

Kids are "like amazing complete beings within themselves. But at some point you start to go 'Oh, you're watching me! Maybe I should stand like this? Or maybe I should do this?' You start to think about it. And it's awful."

The indie singer-songwriter, who performs as Mirah (pronounced MEER-ah), grew up here. On a recent Saturday, back home from Portland, Ore., where she lives, Mirah sat for an interview with her sister, Emily. Mirah, 30, began writing songs when she was studying at liberal-arts haven Evergreen State College in Olympia, Wash., the town that's home to influential label K Records, which has put out albums by Sleater-Kinney, Beck, and Beat Happening.

Her first album, the low-fi "You Think It's Like This, But Really It's Like This," came out in K in 2000, and it was followed by the stunning "Advisory Committee" in 2001. "Songs From the Black Mountain Music Project" (a collaboration with Ginger Brooks Takahashi), and last year's quietly stirring "C'mon Miracle."

In 2004, she also released "To All We Stretch the Open Arm," a subtle antiwar record, recorded with Portland's Black Cat Orchestra, that mixed originals

and Argentinian folk songs with covers of Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Kurt Weill.

She commands a cult audience in this country and abroad. Her songs set her apart from the guitar-strumming pack with telling details in the music and lyrics that can bring the listener up short, such as on the sexually frank "Murphy Bed" or "You Think" or the near-orchestral epic "Cold, Cold Water," which opened "Advisory Committee" with a flourish.

She sings in a girlish voice that seems utterly guileless, but she says maintaining that childlike quality, and not letting creativity be undermined by self-consciousness, is not as easy as it may sound.

"I think I actually got into making music because it was immediately gratifying," she says. "When I first started writing songs, I couldn't even play the guitar. I could play, like, one string. I wasn't very conscious of what I was doing or what was happen-

ing. I was just making music ...

"But the skills you need to write songs and play music don't have anything to do with having a music-theory background or having played since you were a kid. It's just not important. You can just start doing it."

The Zeitlyn grew up in an environment conducive to creati-

ty. Their mother, Elizabeth, is a painter, and father Jay, "has really eclectic musical taste," says Emily, 32. "World music and klezmer and gospel, and all kinds of stuff. He gave me this Nina Simone record when I was 17, which changed my life."

For a time, the family lived in a commune in West Virginia, and the alternative lifestyle rubbed off on the children: Mirah, whose middle name means good day or holiday in Hebrew, went on a peace march in Russia when she was 12, and spent her junior year at Evergreen building houses in Norway and learning to speak Norwegian. Every winter, she works for

two months at her brother Dylan's farm, north of Scranton, Pa., harvesting maple syrup.

Phil Elvrum, of the band the Microphones, produces Mirah's albums, in which spacious arrangements are flavored with out-of-the-ordinary instrumental touches, from ukuleles to pump organs to tape loops.

He's enamored of her "powerfully beautiful voice" but says she's also "very good at letting me into her songs ... She's generous with her personal work, but also sturdy enough to have it still be unquestionably hers when it's done."

Mirah says she has never had an overarching plan for her career, which she gets after "has me a little concerned. But one of the reasons that I don't have a plan [now] is that I didn't [originally], and things are fine. But at the same time, I think maybe things would be better if I did have a plan."

Mirah, who manages herself, also worries about the distractions of the music business getting in the way of her creativity. To that end, she puts herself in situations that force her to stretch herself creatively.

In 2003, she traveled to Buenos Aires, where she recorded two songs with Kassara, that wound up on "C'mon Miracle," and later this year she plans to retreat to a Puget Sound island with Elvrum to write and record.

"The business aspect is very distracting; the state of mind I have to be in is counterproductive to being a creative artist," Mirah says. "It makes me have to think about myself. And I want to be able to do things."



KRT

YOUR MONEY

Environmentalists give minivans

Dear Tom and Ray:

I am an environmentalist who somehow went and had four kids — one 6-year-old and a pair of 2-year-old twins. My husband wants us to get a van or — heaven forbid! — a sport utility vehicle, but I am trying very hard to hold out until a hybrid version is available OR the government changes its fuel-economy standards so that the larger vehicles will have to do significantly better than 19 miles per gallon. Meanwhile, our Volvo station wagon is pretty much bursting at the seams. Can you suggest any environmentally friendly options for my family and me? My husband says he will welcome your opinion! — Kathryn

TOM: That's a tough one, Kathryn. With three little kids, all their stuff and a husband, you certainly qualify for a bigger vehicle.

RAY: Or you have to convince one kid to run away and join the circus.

TOM: I would definitely not get an SUV, because it offers no advantages over a minivan (except, perhaps, styling), and lots of disadvantages. Those disadvantages include fuel economy, ease of entry and exit, ride, handling, safety and the rotten tomatoes being thrown at you by members of the Sierra Club.

RAY: And even minivans, these days, are getting larger and more powerful, thanks to the industry's (and, to be fair, I suppose, its customers') obsession with power over fuel economy. The leading minivans all get in the neighborhood of 18-20 mpg in the city, and 24-27 mpg on the highway. That's certainly better than the big SUVs, but it's not as good as it could be, given the technological advances of the past 20 years.

TOM: And hybrid minivans are certainly coming at some point. But they're not here yet.

RAY: So, given that all the major minivans offer similar gas mileage, we'd steer you toward the ones

that handle best, ride best and have the best reputation for reliability. Those would be the Honda Odyssey and the Toyota Sienna. We'd actually give the edge to the Honda, since it feels more maneuverable to us (even though the two vans are almost the exact same size).

TOM: And the Honda now comes with "cylinder deactivation" technology. With that technology, the Odyssey uses all six cylinders when accelerating, but shuts off three of the cylinders when you're just cruising and don't need so much power.

RAY: That feature boosts the Odyssey's fuel economy to 20 mpg city and 28 mpg highway, which puts it at the high end of the minivan spectrum. That should be enough to allow you to keep your tree-hugger card for another few years. Good luck, Kathryn.

Dear Tom and Ray:

I read a column in the newspaper the other day by that notorious cheapskate Andy Rooney. He has a car that requires gasoline with 91 octane (as do I). He and I have both found that you cannot always find 91 octane at the pumps. When that happens, I use 93 and just pay the piper. But the ol' cheapskate Rooney just puts in five gallons of 89 octane, mixes in 93 and calls the mixture 91! Can this be? Is this the way octane works? — Stan

RAY: It sure does that way that way.

TOM: In fact, that's how the pump does it. Most gas stations have only two underground gasoline tanks: one for the lowest octane, and one for the highest octane. Then the pump blends those two to produce everything in between.

RAY: And it's exactly linear, like the pal Andy says it is. So if you mixed one part 89 and three parts 93, you'd end up with 92.

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Tom and Ray Magliozzi



More than 10,000 students tried to register for 1,580 available college entrance exam positions last week at China Academy of Art in Hangzhou. China has many job seekers, but soon it will have fewer workers supporting retirees than in the United States.

Retirement-protection fears not limited to U.S.

The Dallas Morning News

WASHINGTON — If you think our Social Security system is heading for trouble, look abroad.

In much of the world, people are having fewer children and living longer. Japan is on a path where its retirees will equal the number of workers in 35 years.

In 45 years, there will be 10 retirees for every 7 workers in Italy. The United States will have 23 workers for every 10 retirees.

Even in China, where there seems no end to the number of people who want jobs, there will soon be fewer workers supporting retirees than in America, thanks to its one-child policy.

All these countries are learning that leaving it to the young to support the elderly — a pay-as-you-go system like Social Security — is not feasible.

"We're in much better shape to confront the aging challenge than the countries of continental Europe or Japan," said Richard Jackson, director of the Global Aging Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "But good shape is a relative statement."

The puzzle each country faces is how to increase retirement savings before it's too late. The alternative is higher taxes and lower benefits.

In Japan, taxes have gone so high — and young people have so little faith in getting anything from it when they retire — that large numbers of people are refusing to pay their retirement taxes.

More than 20 countries have created personal retirement accounts that let people save for their own retirement, usually while still paying taxes to support those already retired.

WEDNESDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

INDEXES				
52-week	High	Low	Name	52-week
10,858.81	9,796.48	-	Dow Jones Industrial	10,811.97
3,822.96	2,421.46	-	Dow Jones Transportation	3,725.41
358.20	259.08	-	Dow Jones Utilities	352.45
11,128.31	1,211.31	-	NASDAQ Composite	1,241.07
1,521.30	1,150.74	-	AMEX	1,514.63
2,150.52	1,450.52	-	Russell 2000 Composite	1,461.06
1,217.10	1,060.72	-	S&P 500	1,210.88
548.29	348.29	-	S&P 600	348.29
656.11	325.50	-	Russell 2000	637.33
12,704.38	1,206.52	-	DJ Wilshire 5000	11,928.24

NYSE					AMEX					NASDAQ				
Most Active (\$1 or more)					Most Active (\$1 or more)					Most Active (\$1 or more)				
Name	Vol	(\$1 or more)	Chg		Name	Vol	(\$1 or more)	Chg		Name	Vol	(\$1 or more)	Chg	
Lucant	516,901	3.18	-81		SPDR	625,273	127.17	-06		Need/Unit	10,614	37.61	-02	
Unit	447,875	3.18	-38		SPDR	625,273	127.17	-38		Need/Unit	8,518	35.02	-02	
Quest	499,819	3.30	-12		SPDR	625,273	127.17	-38		Need/Unit	8,518	35.02	-02	
Need/Unit	336,688	2.52	-40		SPDR	625,273	127.17	-38		Need/Unit	8,518	35.02	-02	
Need/Unit	258,679	62.68	-38		SPDR	625,273	127.17	-38		Need/Unit	8,518	35.02	-02	
Need/Unit	214,474	24.41	-38		SPDR	625,273	127.17	-38		Need/Unit	8,518	35.02	-02	
Need/Unit	176,444	17.22	-31		SPDR	625,273	127.17	-38		Need/Unit	8,518	35.02	-02	
Need/Unit	130,533	35.48	-38		SPDR	625,273	127.17	-38		Need/Unit	8,518	35.02	-02	
Need/Unit	140,875	26.37	-38		SPDR	625,273	127.17	-38		Need/Unit	8,518	35.02	-02	
Need/Unit	140,875	15.88	-38		SPDR	625,273	127.17	-38		Need/Unit	8,518	35.02	-02	
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Need/Unit	140,875	15.88	-38		SPDR	625,273								

KEY DEFENSE STOCKS					
Name	Div	PE	Last	Chg	%YTD
Atlantic Technology	-	17	75.54	+4	+7.9
Aero Holdings	-	17	75.54	+4	+7.9
Bollinger	1.00	24	31.01	+31	+6.8
Compton Systems	-	17	75.54	+4	+7.9
Engineered Sys Int'l	39	53.38	-38	-	-
General Dynamics	1.44	17	105.08	+2	+1.4
General Electric	88	23.30	-33	-25	-
General Motors	1.44	17	105.08	+2	+1.4
Ham Corp	29	68.86	-33	+11.4	-
Hamco Corp	38	21.21	-33	-	-
Lockheed Martin	28	21.21	-33	-	-
L3 Communications	58	42.19	-33	+1.5	-
Northrop Grumman	38	21.21	-33	-	-

KEY MUTUAL FUNDS					
Name	NAV	Chg	%YTD		
Fidelity Invest World	38.00	+4.00	+10.5		
Fidelity Invest Govt	29.00	+0.00	+0.0		
Investment Company of America	29.00	-0.01	-0.2		
Fidelity Divd Growth	29.00	-0.01	-0.2		
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200					

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		
Euro costs	\$1.3486	
Dollar buys	0.7415	
Japanese yen	106.00	
South Korean won (March 3)	122.00	
Commercial rates		
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3760	
British pound	0.5150	
Canada (Dollar)	0.7129	
Denmark (Krone)	6.46	
Egypt (Pound)	0.2500	
Hong Kong (Dollar)	0.7994	
Hungary (Forint)	166.00	
Iceland (Krona)	90.45	
Israel (Shekel)	0.2395	
Japan (Yen)	106.00	
Norway (Krone)	0.2580	
Philippines (Peso)	0.0250	
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	0.2680	
Singapore (Dollar)	0.7129	
South Korea (Won)	106.00	
Switzerland (Franc)	0.7129	
Thailand (Baht)	0.3330	
Taiwan (Dollar)	0.0250	
United States (Dollar)	1.0000	

Key Defense Stocks		
52-week	High	Low
10,858.81	9,796.48	-
3,822.96	2,421.46	-
358.20	259.08	-
11,128.31	1,211.31	-
1,521.30	1,150.74	-
2,150.52	1,450.52	-
1,217.10	1,060.72	-
548.29	348.29	-
656.11	325.50	-
12,704.38	1,206.52	-

Key Mutual Funds		
52-week	High	Low
10,858.81	9,796.48	-
3,822.96	2,421.46	-
358.20	259.08	-
11,128.31	1,211.31	-
1,521.30	1,150.74	-
2,150.52	1,450.52	-
1,217.10	1,060.72	-
548.29	348.29	-
656.11	325.50	-
12,704.38	1,206.52	-

Cents and Sensibility

Money tip of the day

Be a discreet tipper

MarketWatch

NEW YORK — If you got exceptional service at your favorite restaurant and left money for the waiter, that's a bit. But if you slip the maitre d' a \$20 bill to get an excellent table, that kind of advance tip is called greasing.

Greasing doesn't have to be as sly as the name implies. Used properly, it can help ensure you get good service when it counts — such as making sure that bottle of champagne you bought for your anniversary is iced and waiting when you arrive at the hotel.

It also indicates to staff that you're willing to tip, so they may go above and beyond the call of duty to make sure you're treated well.

Slime enemies that use the tip turns into a bribe, such as if you tip a maitre d' with the intent of getting bumped ahead of a long line of hungry restaurant patrons. An

advance tip is equally slimy when you aren't discreet.

To discreetly tip:

- Talk to the person in power. Figure out who has the clout to assist you.
- Speak privately about what you need. Exchanging money openly in front of other patrons puts the "grease" in greasing, and may mean the person you are tipping is less likely to offer extra services.
- Privacy also comes in handy if you aren't skilled in handing over the money inconspicuously.
- Fold the bill. Don't just hand the other person a wad of cash. Fold the bill so that it fits comfortably in your palm. Be sure to fold it so that the denomination is still visible and the other person can see what tip you are offering. You might slip in the bill while shaking hands, or simply offer it.
- Be sincere. Thank the person for his or her help.

PRECIOUS METALS

London close		
Gold	\$439.30	
Silver	\$17.21	
INTEREST RATES		
Prime rate	5.50	
Discount rate	3.50	
3-month bill	2.74	
6-month bill	2.74	
1-year bill	2.74	
30-year Treasury	5.00	
Source: The Associated Press, Bank of America		

Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



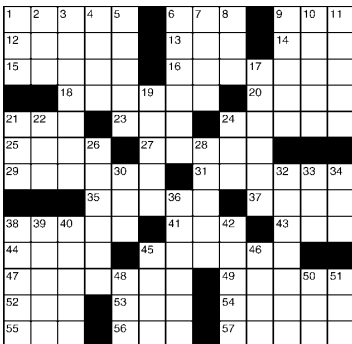
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Three-dimensional
- 6 Craze
- 9 Wrestling venue
- 12 "8 Simple Rules" cast member
- 13 Chihuahua cheer
- 14 Tavern request
- 15 Spot on the map
- 16 Cartland's genre
- 18 Charm
- 20 Even
- 21 "— your old man!"
- 24 Frosts
- 25 Curvature
- 27 Tablecloth spoiler
- 29 Fold
- 31 TV detective played by Brosnan
- 35 Stop in
- 37 February forecast
- 38 Jeweler's unit
- 41 Fresh
- 43 Shade
- 44 Actor Wilson
- 45 Layers
- 47 Decorative drape
- 49 Singer Travis
- 52 Delugent brand
- 53 A billion years
- 54 Host
- 55 Mardi Gras VIP
- 56 Mel of Cooperstown
- 57 Exhausted

Down

- 1 William Petersen's series
- 2 DHL rival
- 3 Equilibrium
- 4 Bibliography word
- 5 Whale constellation
- 6 Robin Hood's balliwick
- 7 Scads
- 8 Rep.'s foe
- 9 Unreasonable enthusiasm
- 10 Peptic problem
- 11 "Monopoly" cards
- 17 Expiates
- 19 Comes in second
- 21 Singer Davis

- 22 Commit a faux pas
- 24 Batter's hope
- 26 Cigar city
- 28 Michaelmas daisy
- 30 Command to Fido
- 32 Heighten
- 33 Bud's partner
- 34 Lamb's mom
- 36 Purpose
- 38 Lid
- 39 Cognizant
- 40 Take 10
- 42 Merchandise
- 45 Glaswegian, e.g.
- 46 Pack down
- 48 Ultramodernist
- 50 Lair
- 51 Nevertheless

Answer to Previous Puzzle



3-4

CRYPTOQUIP

PL RWA OPTYZ CW IYJB
DWOZ CPBJBK. P DAYKK
HYWHYO IWAOW BYLYB CW

RWA JK "TJBIC CWH."
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I FEEL AWFUL FOR CIRCUS ELEPHANTS. WE ALL KNOW THE POOR CREATURES WORK FOR PEANUTS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals T

Husband's odd remark angers wife

Dear Abby: I have been married to "Herbert" for 27 years, and even though we have had our ups and downs — mostly due to his verbal abuse — I thought we were relatively happy.

I went to visit my parents for a week. When I returned, I was telling Herb about a major and exciting change in my relationship with my father, when out of the blue he said, "You know, a guy can't help but wonder what it would have been like to have married someone knock-down, drag-dead gorgeous."

I was dumbfounded. I got up and left the room, Herb became angry and said I must not be "mature" enough to hear his innermost thoughts. Abby, where does a question like that come from? How could I have handled what he said without taking it personally? Am I missing any hidden red

flags here? What would you have said? — **Flabbergasted in Ohio**

Dear Flabbergasted: You're not missing any red flags with your husband. In the first sentence of your letter you labeled him verbally abusive, and your assessment is on target. Considering that you were suck-punched, I'd say you handled the situation with great restraint and maturity. A lesser woman would have replied, "And what makes you think you have what it takes to attract, or to keep, a woman like that?"

Dear Abby



Dear Abby: I am 38 and have never married. I got up and left the room, Herb became angry and said I must not be "mature" enough to hear his innermost thoughts. Abby, where does a question like that come from? How could I have handled what he said without taking it personally? Am I missing any hidden red

I have often felt, and still do, that women look for the "bad boy" or the guy with deep pockets. However, it seems that now they're past their prime and have the two kids the bad boy left them with, I am now good enough — even though I haven't changed. I have had more female "encounters" in my 30s than I ever did in my 20s.

How do you determine the legitimate ones from the ones who just want you to help raise their kids? If I was good enough for them, why should they be good enough for me now?

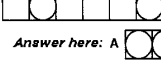
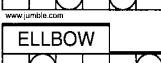
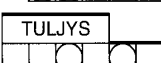
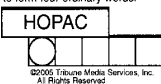
— Not the Consolation Prize, Chesterton, Ind.

Dear Not: If you are still seeing women as shallow as the ones you tried to date in your 20s, you should not involve yourself with any of them. From the tone of your letter, I suspect you will be happier remaining single.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 6940, Los Angeles, CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at <http://www.usexpress.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate.

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



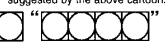
Yesterday's Jumbles: IDIOT FINIS QUAVER PUSHER
Answer: What the kids faced after dinner — A DISH-PUTE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argiliron



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.



(Answers tomorrow)

Fiance far too close with ex-wife

Dear Annie: For the past year, I have been dating "Patrick," a wonderful man who loves me and my children. The problem? He has an ongoing friendship with his ex-wife and the man she left Patrick for.

"Della" and her new husband call us at least once a week to get together, and then she reminisces about their entire 32-year marriage — the places they went, the people they knew, the things they did. The first few times, I sat and listened, but I've since let Patrick know I feel uncomfortable during their walks down memory lane. He assures me they are just friends and has promised to focus less on the past.

Recently, Patrick announced to Della that we are engaged. She cried and privately told me she felt jealous. Something seems not quite right about this situation. Though they both say they are happy, she still acts like a possessive wife. She calls Patrick and confides about her problems

with her husband, and I recently was upset to learn that Patrick told her about a little spat we had.

Patrick says he wants to stay on friendly terms with Della because they have grown children together. I do not want to spend the rest of my life feeling like The Other Woman. Any insight you can offer would be greatly appreciated.

— Please Help Me, I've Fallen in South Dakota

Dear S.D.: It's nice for ex-spouses to remain friendly, but Patrick's relationship with Della is overly clumsy. They should not be sharing confidences about their respective significant others. And since Della has made it clear she still carries a minor torch for her ex, this closeness is asking for trouble.

Patrick needs to create some distance from Della so your upcoming marriage will have a chance to cement itself. Insist that these get-togethers dwindle

down to a few times a year, and tell Patrick that there will be no more conversations with his ex-wife about your relationship unless you initiate them.

Dear Annie: I'd like to express my opinion about brides who have their shower guests pre-address their own thank-you notes. I am offended that I must help the unfortunate bride and groom in a task expressing their gratitude. Perhaps smaller guest lists would not overwhelm those couples.

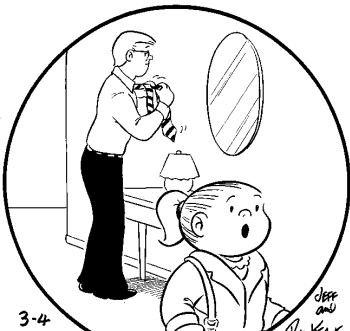
— L.B.

Dear L.B.: Showers weren't originally intended to be such enormous affairs, but that genie is out of the bottle. Also, most women now have full-time jobs and less time. But we agree, you shouldn't invite more people than you are willing to thank properly.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your queries to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 577 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

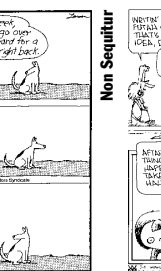
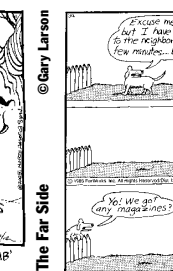
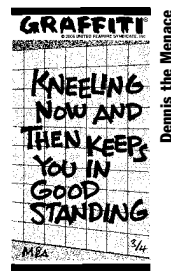
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"It's almost time to go! Daddy's putting on his tie!"



RACING STRIPES

A WEEKLY LOOK AT MOTORSPORTS

Strong, silent type

Unsung Biffle might be man to beat in Nextel Cup

BY MIKE HARRIS
The Associated Press

People tend to overlook Greg Biffle. At 35, he certainly isn't one of NASCAR's so-called Young Guns, nor is he a big talker who elicits much attention. But Biffle definitely has credentials.

A newspaper recently did an anonymous survey of 15 Nextel Cup drivers, asking their opinion on the best in the series. Biffle was on a very short list led by four-time champion Jeff Gordon.

Biffle is the only driver to have won championships in the Busch and Craftsman Truck series. Now, he's giving every indication of being a serious contender for another title in his third full season on NASCAR's top circuit.

"Biffle is no surprise to anybody in the NASCAR garage," said teammate and series champion Kurt Busch. "Everybody knows what a good driver he is and how tough he is and that No. 16 team can be if they put it all together."

Although his first two years in the Cup series produced finishes of 20th and 17th in the standings, the driver from Vancouver, Wash., has four victories. But two of those wins have come in his last three races—the season-finales last year at Homestead-Miami Speedway and last Sunday at California Speedway.

The victory at California was particularly impressive, with Biffle twice coming from far back in the field and leading the last 23 laps.

It was apparently no surprise to Biffle, who predicted he would win the race after testing at the track in January.

"After that test, I had a pretty strong feeling that we would win out here if something crazy didn't happen," he explained.

But that doesn't mean it was easy. Biffle muscled his ill-handling Ford to the end, beating hard-charging Jimmie Johnson by six car-lengths.

"This was the toughest of my life to earn," Biffle said. "We overcame more in that race than I ever have in a race car. The car was so loose at times I could hardly keep it going in the right direction, and I didn't know why."

Now, thanks to that masterful driver's job — and despite a 25th-place finish in the season-opening Daytona 500 — Biffle is fifth in the standings, trailing

"Biffle is no surprise to anybody in the NASCAR garage. Everybody knows what a good driver he is and how tough he is and that No. 16 team can be if they put it all together."

Kurt Busch
Biffle's teammate,
2004 Nextel Cup champion

leader Busch by 67 points.

Biffle gave car owner Jack Roush his first NASCAR title when he won the truck championship in 2000, and added the Busch championship two years later. Now, Biffle would like nothing better than to present his boss a third straight Cup title.

Matt Kenseth gave Roush his first in 2003. "I've learned a lot about myself and the way you have to race to win in Nextel Cup," said Biffle, who has been in some trouble on the track by being overly aggressive. "I really think we've got everything we need to be contenders."

"I think Jack gives us everything we need. Now we just have to put it together and make it happen."

It wouldn't surprise crew chief Doug Richert if Biffle becomes the first driver to win titles in all three of NASCAR's top touring circuits.

"I really feel this team is ready," Richert said. "The team has matured, and we've figured out what we need to give Greg for him to win."

Richert knows a bit about calling the shots for championship teams. He was the crew chief in 1980, when the late Dale Earnhardt won the first of his record-tying seven titles.

Roush, who also fields Cup cars for Busch, Kenseth, long-time star Mark Martin and promising newcomer Carl Edwards, has stood behind Biffle even when the driver made disparaging remarks about the team last year.

"There has never been any doubt about his talent," said Roush, who signed Biffle sight unseen after a recommendation from former NASCAR champion Benny Parsons. "He has the ability to do just about anything he wants in this sport, and I expect him to do it for our team."

But, after just two of 36 races, Biffle doesn't want anybody to get too excited.

He shrugged when asked if his victory here is a sign of things to come.

"I don't know," Biffle said. "I'll let everyone else figure that one out."

Greg Biffle's victory in the Auto Club 500 on Sunday was only his third in Nextel Cup, but it was his second in the past three races. Biffle also is the only driver to win championships in the Busch and Craftsman Truck series.

NEXTEL CUP

Next race:

UAW-DaimlerChrysler 400
March 13, Las Vegas
Motor Speedway

Last race: Greg Biffle took the lead on lap 228 and held off a hard-charging Jimmie Johnson to win the Auto Club 500 at Fontana, Calif. Biffle twice came back from as far back as 30th position.

DRIVER STANDINGS

After 2 of 36 races

1. Kurt Busch	340
2. Jimmie Johnson	335
3. Mark Martin	301
4. Carl Edwards	287
5. Greg Biffle	273
6. Elliott Sadler	272
7. Tony Stewart	268
8. Rusty Wallace	268
9. Sterling Marlin	260
10. Jeff Gordon	258
11. Dale Jarrett	246
12. Ryan Newman	246
13. Kevin Harvick	239
14. Dale Earnhardt Jr.	237
15. Mike Bliss	236
16. Kyle Petty	231
17. Jamie McMurray	227
18. Scott Riggs	224
19. Kevin Lepage	208
20. Brian Vickers	205

BUSCH SERIES

This week: Telcel Motorola 200 at Mexico City (race-delayed, 1 p.m. CET Sunday, AFN-Korea).

Last race: Mark Martin extended his Busch record to 10 wins with his victory at the Stater Bros. 300 in Fontana, Calif. It was Martin's first win in the series since 2000.

Last year: Inaugural race. **Fast facts:** This is the series' first race outside the United States. — Three of the 13 road-course races in Busch history have been won by pole-sitter. — Ten drivers entered in this race are from Mexico. — NASCAR's crew chief, for four races and fired him Sunday for unsupervised use of pit crew modifications on the car during inspection last weekend. **Next race:** Sam's Town 300, March 12, Las Vegas.

FORMULA ONE

This week: Season-opening Australian Grand Prix at Melbourne.

Last year: Last year: Michael Schumacher won his fourth Australian Grand Prix, pacing teammate Rubens Barrichello in a 1-2 finish of Ferrari's Schumacher led from start to finish and completed the race in 1 hour, 24 minutes and 13.75 seconds — 13.5 seconds ahead of Barrichello.

Next race: Malaysian Grand Prix, March 20, Kuala Lumpur.

INDY RACING

This week: Season-opening Toyota Indy 300 at Homestead, Fla. (8 a.m. CET Sunday, AFN-Pakistan, AFN-Korea).

Last year: Sun Hooni passed teammate Helio Castroneves on the last lap with a surprising inside move to win the Toyota Indy 300 for the third time in the race's four-year history. Hornish took the lead on lap 123 from Tomas Scheckter, the driver who took his seat at Pennzoil Panther Racing when Hornish moved to Penske to replace the retired Gil de Ferris.

Fast facts: The other driver to win this race was Scott Dixon in 2003. Buddy Rice set the track qualifying record of 217.338 mph last year. — All four turns at Homestead were rebuilt prior to last year's event, creating three lanes for racing. The banking was six degrees in previous slaloms.

Next race: XM Satellite Radio Indy 200, March 13, Avondale, Ariz.

CRAFTSMAN TRUCKS

Last race: Steve Park earned his first truck series win by taking the American Racing Wheels 200 at Fontana, Calif. Park's previous victory came in the series in 1997. In February, 2001, seven months before he sustained a serious head injury following a crash at Darlington.

Next race: World Financial Group 200, March 18, Hampton, Ga.

CHAMP CARS

Next race: Season-opening Toyota GP of Long Beach (Calif.), April 10.

Standings for other series on Page 24.





The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Larry Hughes made an emphatic and timely return to the Wizards on Wednesday, scoring 31 points in his first game since breaking his thumb to help lead Washington to a 101-98 victory over the Houston Rockets.

Hughes made 11 of 20 shots and had six rebounds and four assists, and backcourt partner Gilbert Arenas had 33 points, eight rebounds and five assists for the Wizards, who had lost two straight and five of six. The Wizards have won eight straight when Hughes is in the lineup, but the previous seven came before he was sidelined after a victory over the Wizards on Jan. 15.

The Wizards were a 17-point third-quarter lead but rallied from an eight-point fourth quarter deficit. Hughes' three-point shot gave Washington the lead for good with a 3:16 remaining, part of a 13-2 run in which Hughes and Arenas combined for 11.

Brendan Haywood scored six of his 12 points in the final two minutes, including a short turnaround fadeaway jumper over Yao Ming to put the Wizards ahead 99-95 with 50 seconds left. Tracy McGrady made a three-pointer for his last of his 26 points with seven seconds remaining, but Arenas made two free throws with six seconds to play to put the Wizards up by three. McGrady, guarded by Hughes, missed a three-pointer that could have tied the game at the buzzer.

Hughes was injured when hit by Quentin Richardson in a drive to the paint during the win over the Suns. The Wizards went 9-11 during his absence and found themselves relying too heavily on Arenas, who averaged 24 points over the 20 games. Hughes entered the game leading the league in steals per game (2.82), and he remained the only NBA player averaging more than 20 points (21.2), five rebounds (6.1), five assists (5.3) and 2.5 steals.

Celtics 104, Lakers 101. At Boston, Kobe Bryant scored 17 first-quarter points

just 30 minutes after setting a lawsuit filed by the woman who accused him of rape, but he was scoreless in the fourth quarter. The rejuvinated Celtics were won three straight since then and six straight at home overall.

Bryant finished with 26 points, and Chucky Atkins Jr. scored 29, scoring 14 in the final 5:06 to keep the Lakers in the game.

Nets 99, 76ers 93. Vince Carter scored 26 of his 32 points in the second half, and Clifford Robinson added 18 points for visiting New Jersey.

Allen Iverson scored 37 points for Philadelphia, and Chris Webber had only 10 in his worst performance in three games for the 76ers. Philadelphia has lost three of four since acquiring Webber from Sacramento last week.

The Nets have won three straight to close within 1 1/2 games of second-place Philadelphia in the Atlantic Division.

SuperSonics 103, Cavaliers 86. Ray Allen scored 21 points, Vladimir Radmanovic hit five three-pointers and visiting Seattle posted Dan Gilbert's first game as the Cavaliers' owner.

Richard Lewis added 20 points for the Sonics. LeBron James scored 32 points, matching a career high with five three-pointers for Cleveland.

Magic 114, Kings 111. At Orlando, Dwight Howard had 20 points and 16 rebounds for the Magic. Grant Hill had 20

points, and rookie Jameer Nelson had 19 points and six assists.

Peja Stojakovic led Sacramento with 28 points in his first game after missing seven games because of a hamstring injury. Mike Bibby added 26 points and 10 assists.

Warriors 99, Timberwolves 93. Derek Fisher had 23 points and nine assists to lead Golden State to its sixth road victory of the season.

After trailing by 11 points in the third quarter, the Warriors overtook the fourth with a 16-2 run.

Kevin Garnett had 28 points and 13 rebounds for the Timberwolves.

Spurs 92, Raptors 86. At San Antonio, Manu Ginobili scored 17 points, and Tony Parker added 15 to help the NBA-leading Spurs improve to 44-13 overall and 25-2 at the SAC Center.

Chris Bosh led Toronto with 16 points.

Jazz 96, Hawks 74. At Salt Lake City, Mehmet Okur scored 19 points to help Utah beat Atlanta for its first three-game winning streak since the opening week of the season.

Josh Childress led Atlanta with 21 points. The Hawks, playing the final game of a seven-game road trip, have lost 10 in a row overall and 21 straight on the road.

Hornets 84, Bobcats 85. Dan Dickau scored 18 points, and Jason Richardson and P.J. Brown had 12 points and 15 rebounds for New Orleans.

Brown and Nailon were the only players on the team who played for the Hornets during their first season in Charlotte. Emeka Okafor led the Bobcats with 18 points.

Clippers 101, Mavericks 92. At Los Angeles, Corey Maggette scored 35 points to help the Los Angeles Clippers defeat the home game and end Dallas' road winning streak at six games.

Mikhail Zhivotov scored 25 points for the Mavericks.

In his first game since breaking his thumb on Jan. 15, Washington Wizards guard Larry Hughes scored 31 points in a 101-98 win over the Houston Rockets on Wednesday night in Washington. The Wizards had lost two straight and five of six.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	
Boston	30	28	.517	
Philadelphia	30	28	.517	2 1/2
New Jersey	22	36	.379	8 1/2
New York	24	32	.431	5 1/2
Toronto	24	32	.431	5 1/2

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	32	26	.554	
Washington	32	26	.554	9
Orlando	29	29	.500	17 1/2
Charlotte	22	36	.379	28 1/2
Atlanta	14	44	.241	35 1/2

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	31	25	.554	.5
Cleveland	30	26	.538	1 1/2
Chicago	29	27	.517	3 1/2
Minnesota	28	28	.500	5 1/2
Milwaukee	23	33	.411	13 1/2

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	44	13	.772	—
Dallas	38	19	.670	5 1/2
Houston	35	22	.569	11 1/2
Memphis	31	26	.545	16 1/2
New Orleans	20	37	.350	31 1/2

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	40	14	.741	—
Portland	39	15	.682	1 1/2
Minnesota	28	26	.519	10 1/2
Oklahoma City	20	34	.370	20 1/2
Utah	20	34	.370	20 1/2

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	43	14	.754	—
Golden State	39	18	.682	4 1/2
Lakers	38	19	.670	5 1/2
Clippers	31	26	.545	16 1/2
Sacramento	17	40	.298	36 1/2

Wednesday's games

	W	L	Pct	GB
Washington 101, Houston 96				
Seattle 103, Cleveland 80				
Orlando 104, Sacramento 111				
New Jersey 99, Philadelphia 93				
Boston 104, L.A. Lakers 101				
Golden State 99, Minnesota 93				
San Antonio 92, Toronto 85				
Utah 96, Atlanta 74				
New Orleans 94, Charlotte 85				
L.A. Clippers 101, Dallas 92				

Thursday's games

	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami at New Jersey				
Charlotte at Denver				
Detroit at Orlando				
Friday's games				
New York at Phoenix				
Golden State at Washington				
Cleveland at Philadelphia				
Charlotte at Atlanta				
Toronto at Memphis				
San Antonio at Orleans				
Sacramento at Miami				

Milwaukee at Minnesota

Chicago at San Antonio

Dallas at Portland

Detroit at Cleveland

Saturday's games

Dallas at L.A. Lakers

Denver at L.A. Clippers

Washington at Charlotte

Philadelphia at Atlanta

Orlando at New Jersey

Chicago at Milwaukee

Portland at Phoenix

Sunday's games

Wizards 101, Rockets 98

Houston — McGrady 59-6-26, Howard 20-9-2-5, Yao 34-5-11, 10-22-20-24

Wizards 101, Hawks 96

Orlando 104, Magic 94

Wizards 101, Pistons 94

Wizards 101, Bulls 98

Wizards 101, Nets 99

Wizards 101, 76ers 93

Wizards 101, Cavaliers 86

Wizards 101, Hornets 84

Wizards 101, Bobcats 85

Wizards 101, Mavericks 92

Wizards 101, Clippers 101

Wizards 101, Kings 111

Wizards 101, Spurs 92

Wizards 101, Raptors 86

Wizards 101, Warriors 99

Wizards 101, Suns 99

Wizards 101, Trail Blazers 95

Wizards 101, Grizzlies 95

Wizards 101, Jazz 96

Wizards 101, Pistons 94

Wizards 101, Bulls 98

Wizards 101, Nets 99

Wizards 101, 76ers 93

Wizards 101, Cavaliers 86

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Wizards 101, Grizzlies 95

Wizards 101, Jazz 96

Wizards 101, Pistons 94

Wizards 101, Bulls 98

Calhoun joins the club

Connecticut coach joins Krzyzewski and Boheim with 700th victory as Huskies batter Georgetown

By DONNA TOMMELLE
The Associated Press

STORRS, Conn. — For the third time this season, and second time in less than a week, another name was added to the list of coaches with 700 victories.

Jim Calhoun became the 18th Division I coach — and seventh active — to reach the mark when No. 15 Connecticut beat Georgetown 83-64 on Wednesday night. Duke's Mike Krzyzewski reached the milestone in December and Syracuse's Jim Boheim got there last Saturday.

"This is a very special night for Connecticut. It's a special night for me and it's a very special night for our players," Calhoun said. "A coach is only a reflection of so many assistants and great players."

Calhoun, 62, is in his 33rd year as a coach, won 248 games in 14 seasons at Northeastern and has 42 in 19 seasons at Connecticut, which he transformed from a decent regional program into a national power.

He has led the Huskies to two national championships (1999 and 2004), 14 Big East titles and an NIT championship.

Some of his former players who are now NBA stars — Ray Allen, Richard Hamilton, Eneke Okafor — co-terranulated Calhoun in a video tribute shown after the game.

His current players did their part, too.

Charlie Villanueva scored 24 points and freshman Rudy Gay added a season-high 20 in a game that turned into a celebration in the late going. The sellout crowd

"It means we're either getting older or getting better. Let's just hope we're getting better."

Jim Boheim
Syracuse coach and 700-game winner

of 10,167 stood for the closing seconds, chanting "700" and wildly waving placards printed with the number.

"We were definitely focused and pumped up for this game," Villanueva said. "We wanted to do this for Coach and we did."

The Huskies (20-6, 12-3) made sure they put this one away early, well ahead of the celebration. The Huskies have been one of the hottest teams in the conference down the stretch, winning their last eight Big East games, to tie Boston College for first place.

The streak is due in large part to the emergence of point guard Marcus Williams, who leads the league in assists. He finished with 11 points and eight assists Wednesday.

"He makes us go," Calhoun said of Williams. "He throws passes that make kids can't see. He makes everybody's jobs so much easier."

The Hoyas (16-10, 8-7) continued to slide, losing their fourth straight. Freshman Jeff Green led Georgetown with 17 points and helped get the Hoyas out to a quick start.

Green opened the game with a three-pointer as the Hoyas hit their first three shots from beyond the arc and played the Huskies close for several minutes. The Hoyas' biggest lead was 19-15 with 12:10 left, but it didn't last long.

The Huskies blew open the game with a stifling press and 20-3 run that started with a driving layup by Williams.

He also assisted on spectacular dunks by Villanueva and Gay. But what brought the fans to their feet was Williams' steal and over-the-head half-court pass to Gay who was fouled as he went in for the dunk. Gay hit both shots to cap the run and give Connecticut a 39-24 lead. Gay's fallaway at the buzzer put Connecticut up 41-26 at halftime.

Georgetown would get no closer than 14 points thereafter and the Huskies' ever-intense coach made sure his team played hard until the end. He angrily flung his sport coat in the middle of an 11-2 Georgetown run early in the second half and called a timeout. The Huskies quickly regrouped and the rout was on.

"Everything he does, he wants you to be as successful as you can be," Williams said. "His expectations are high because he knows you can achieve. It's an honor to be here with Coach."

Boheim, whose Orange (24-5) close the regular season Saturday at Storrs, also was part of the video tribute and welcomed Calhoun into the 700 club.

"It means we're either getting older or getting better," Boheim said. "Let's just hope we're getting better. We'll see you Saturday."



Connecticut coach Jim Calhoun blows a kiss to the crowd following the Huskies' 83-64 defeat of Georgetown, Calhoun's 700th career victory.

Seniors have their day in Kentucky home finale

The Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — If it weren't true, it would be an unbelievably happy story line. Two seniors — one of whom had limited playing time during his career — starred in their final home game.

Chuck Hayes and Josh Carrier went in style Wednesday night, leading No. 3 Kentucky to a 73-61 victory over Tennessee.

Hayes scored nine of his 13 points in the final 5½ minutes for the Wildcats (23-3, 14-1), who already had clinched the Southeastern Conference title. Kentucky has one regular-season game remaining, on Sunday at Florida.

That Hayes starred against Tennessee wasn't too surprising since the forward has started 102 consecutive games. Carrier's performance was unexpected.

The guard made his first career start and set career highs for minutes (19) and points (nine) while shooting 3-for-5 from three-point range and his 11th career game cap at opportune moments for Kentucky.

"It was a well-played-out script

Men's Top 25 Roundup

for two young men who are finishing their careers in front of their fans. Kentucky coach Tubby Smith said, "If you were writing a script about how you want the game to play out, it unfolded the right way."

"Chuck made the plays down the stretch when we needed clutch scoring. We kept going to him and he kept delivering. Josh made his three in the first half and really did a good job defensively against Chris Lofton."

The Volunteers (12-16, 5-10) hung in with the Wildcats for most of the game, tying it 55-55 with 8:25 left on the fifth three-pointer of the game by Lofton, a freshman guard who was Kentucky's Mr. Basketball in 2004.

Tennessee didn't score again until 1:53 remained, and Kentucky extended its win streak to 16 of the next 18 points to extend its winning streak over the Volunteers to seven games.

After Lofton's basket, Tennessee missed three chances to take the lead before Hayes gave the Wildcats the lead for good with a three-point play with 5:18 left. That was Kentucky's first basket in the 39½ minutes.

Hayes — who missed all but 6 minutes of the first half after picking up two early fouls — seemed determined to make sure the Wildcats won their last home game. With Kentucky up 59-55, Hayes came up with a breakout dunk after making a steal. On Kentucky's next possession, he worked underneath for a basket, making it 63-55 with 3:15 left.

Hayes capped his burst with a dunk with 1:23 left, and the fan favorite left to a standing ovation with 54 seconds left. He finished 5-for-6 from the field.

Hayes and Carrier teamed up after the game, when they joined their teammates and a crowd of 24,205 in singing "My Old Kentucky Home."

"I didn't think it would get to me and I didn't think I'd cry," Hayes said. "I tried to look at the

ground when they played 'My Old Kentucky Home,' but I looked up and saw all the signs. It just came over me at once and hit me."

No. 4 Wake Forest 98, Georgia Tech 91: Vytas Danielius had 17 points and 11 rebounds and the Demon Deacons (25-4, 12-3 Atlantic Coast Conference) rallied from 11 points down in the second half to finish 16-0 at home. Jarrett Jack had 23 points for the Yellow Jackets (16-10, 7-8).

No. 7 Kansas 72, Kansas St. 65: Senior Wayne Simien had 25 points and a career-high 20 rebounds as Kansas (22-4, 12-3 Big 12) celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first game played at Allen Fieldhouse. The Jayhawks clinched at least a tie for the Big 12 championship with their 30th straight victory over the Wildcats (15-11, 5-10).

No. 8 Oklahoma St. 69, Texas A&M 63: John Lucas III scored 27 points for the Cowboys (21-5, 11-4 Big 12), who snapped a two-game losing streak by hitting 15 straight free throws down the

stretch. Oklahoma State extended the nation's longest current home winning streak to 29 games.

No. 14 Michigan St. 69, Northwestern 58: Maurice Ager scored 20 points, including a clutch three-pointer with 3:30 left that curtailed Northwestern's comeback from an 18-point deficit, as the visiting Spartans (21-5, 12-3 Big Ten) won for the seventh time in eight games.

No. 19 Villanova 79, Seton Hall 58: Randy Foye scored 27 points as the Wildcats (20-6, 10-5 Big East) reached 20 victories for the first time since 2000.

No. 21 Alabama 94, Auburn 53: Earnest Shelton and Kennedy Winston each scored 24 points for the Crimson Tide (22-6, 11-4 Southeastern Conference), while Auburn (12-16, 3-12), lost its fifth straight.

No. 22 Cincinnati 77, Tulane 56: Jihad Muhammad made six three-pointers and scored a career-high 24 points as the Bearcats (23-6, 11-4 Conference USA) handed Tulane (9-17, 3-12) its fifth straight loss.

With much fanfare, Nats spring into action

Washington debuts with 5-3 win over Mets

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
The Associated Press

VIERA, Fla. — It had been 12,207 days since a team represented Washington on a major league diamond.

For the fans and the players, it seemed to be worth the wait, even if this was only spring training.

With "Nationals" stitched on home white jerseys for the first time, and with a vocal near-sellout crowd in the stands, the team formerly known as the Montreal Expos beat the New York Mets and new manager Willie Randolph 5-3 Wednesday in the spring training opener for both teams.

"We're the Washington Nationals now, we're not the Montreal Expos anymore. It's nice to be in one place, and not traveling like those guys were traveling last year," said outfielder Jose Guillen, who hit a two-run homer in his first game since being acquired from the Angels.

"That's one of the reasons [general manager Jim Bowden] brought me here. I said, 'If you're in the same situation, don't even ask me here.' He promised me we were going to have a home."

It's about time, after the Expos weathered the threat of contraction, "home" games in Puerto Rico, and a drawn-out agreement to move to Washington. The nation's capital has been a baseball town since the Senators left for Texas after the 1971 season.

"It was special because of the situation. We're all aware of it. You always try to keep your perspective that it's an exhibition game," Nationals manager Frank Robinson said. "It's the next step, getting a little closer to the real thing, and you do get excited about that. You can't get too up, though."

Tell that to the fans.

An announced sellout of 7,558 began arriving more than five hours before game time,



JONATHAN NEWTON/The Washington Post

The Washington Nationals take the field Wednesday for their spring training opener. The attendance of 7,558 was larger than the crowd for half of the team's final 14 games in Montreal.

hoping for a photo, autograph — or just a glimpse of a player. The line at the stadium gates was several dozen deep when they opened 1½ hours before the first pitch.

The attendance was bigger than it was for half of the team's final 14 games in Montreal. Even the Mets were impressed by the turnout.

"It was pretty cool. It's not often that the first game of spring training is nationally televised. I'm happy for those guys," said New York starter Tom Glavine, who allowed two hits in two scoreless innings.

Washington's starters sprinted onto the field at 1:02 p.m. EST, and a minute later came another first in Nationals history, albeit a tad more dubious: the debut of the team theme song, "We Are the Washington Nationals," which sounded like AC/DC. Blessed Union of Souls recorded the song and offered it to Bowden.

"I was wondering, 'What's going on?' It was like head-banging, then it said 'Nationals' and it was pretty cool," outfielder Brad Wilkerson said. "It's pretty cool to have your own song. It was pretty upbeat. We didn't have a song in Montreal."

There were a lot of positive signs for the Nationals on Wednesday.

Starter Tony Armas Jr., who missed most of the past two seasons after major shoulder surgery, worked two hitless innings with two strikeouts. He threw 28 pitches and said he didn't feel any pain.

The three key new position players — Guillen, Cristian Guzman and Vinny Castilla — each had a hit. Jose Vidro, who missed the final six weeks last season to have right knee surgery, singled and scored a run.

Chad Cordero struck out the side in the ninth, putting the Nationals' first victory in the books.

"We're undefeated. We've never lost a game, so that's exciting," Bowden said.

Veterans shut out for Hall induction

BY RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Gil Hodges, Ron Santo and everyone else on the ballot fell short Wednesday as the baseball Veterans Committee again failed to elect anyone to the Hall of Fame.

Hodges and Santo came the closest with 65 percent — 75 percent was needed for induction — each falling eight votes shy. Tony Oliva and Jim Kaat were the only other players to be picked on more than half of the 80 ballots.

In 2003, the redesigned committee also pitched a shutout. There will not be another election until 2007, when managers, umpires and executives are due to be considered.

"We feel the current process works by upholding the Hall of Fame's very high standards for election," Hall chairman Jane Forbes Clark said.

The current 83-member committee includes the 60 living Hall of Famers plus eight members of the writers' wing, 14 members of the broadcasters' wing and one member of the old Veterans Committee.

All but three turned in their paper ballots this year.

Thus far, the revised committee has not developed a consensus on service members, leaving it unclear whether anyone will be elected.

New York Yankees manager Joe Torre, a former NL MVP, was fifth with 36 votes.

World Series champs have fun at the White House

BY PATRICK DICKSON
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — It was a clear day, with the wind blowing out. A perfect day for Boston Red Sox baseball.

President Bush welcomed members of the 2004 World Series champions to the White House on Wednesday in front of a few hundred members of Red Sox Nation.

The fans started chants of "Here we go, Red Sox, here we go!" punctuated by the obligatory "Yankees suck!" as they waited for the President and Vice President Dick Cheney to appear.

"The last time this team won a championship, Woodrow Wilson lived here," the president said.

Bush worked the crowd with a number of jokes directed toward the team, singling out center fielder Johnny Damon.

"I appreciate the way this team played baseball," he said. "It took a lot of guts, and it took a lot of hair."

Damon whipped his trademark loopy around.

But, Bush said, "No one expected the answer to the curse of the Bambino would be a bunch of idi-



JOE GRONELSKI/Stars and Stripes

Boston Red Sox players, from left to right, Kevin Millar, Jason Varitek, David Ortiz and Johnny Damon talk to reporters outside the West Wing of the White House on Wednesday afternoon.

ots," referring to the team's self-assigned moniker. "But those guys don't know baseball."

Curt Schilling, who pitched in the postseason despite a sutured ankle, and catcher Jason Varitek, the team's new captain, presented President Bush a home jersey with No. 43, and Cheney with an away jersey with his name and No. 2.

The ceremony got a late start; schedules got bumped up because the president had earlier posthumously awarded Jackie Robinson a Congressional gold medal.

Most of the squad flew in from spring training in Ft. Myers, Fla. Notably absent was World Series MVP Manny Ramirez, whose team officials said was visiting his sick grandmother.

The team was joined by former Red Sox Don DMaggio, Jimmy Piersall and Johnny Pesky, who played on the 1946 team that lost the World Series to the St. Louis Cardinals in seven games. The Sox swept the Cards in 2004.

Damon, Varitek, David Ortiz and Kevin Millar met with reporters afterward.

Asked what they thought of the visit, they didn't miss a beat.

"We don't think, remember?" Damon said with a grin.

"No, that's last year's thing," Millar said. "We need a new stick."

They laughed when asked a question about Yankee third baseman Alex Rodriguez, who has had a war of words with some Boston players since the Red Sox beat the Yankees in last year's playoffs.

"All right, the first A-Rod question," Millar laughed, then wondered aloud when the first steroid question would be.

Soon it was asked, and Millar responded with a dead-on impersonation of basketball announcer Mary Albert — "Yes!"

Varitek answered. "I will not get any smaller this

year, OK?"

Following the ceremony, the players went up 16th Street to visit some of the wounded at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

The Sox seemed moved as they shook hands and spoke with recovering servicemembers in the Physical Therapy Clinic, according to a Walter Reed press release. Media were not allowed to accompany the team on the visit.

Many service members shared their stories about how they were injured fighting in the war on terrorism, and the players listened intently as they signed autographs on caps, baseballs and T-shirts they brought to give out to the patients.

As for the White House visit, the four agreed it was "truly an honor," as Millar noted.

"I'm a huge Bush fan," Damon said. "He'd fit right in with this team."

Does that mean he's an idiot? a reporter asked.

"You said that," Damon said. And the captain jumped in.

"Let's clear this up. No. He is not an idiot."

E-mail Pat Dickson at: dicksonp@stripes.com.sdl

Receivers are first day's big catch

Moss traded; free agent Mason signs with Ravens

BY BARRY WILNER
The Associated Press

Receivers grabbed the headlines on the first day of NFL free agency.

Derrick Mason, who led all wideouts with 96 catches last season, joined Baltimore on Wednesday. T.J. Houshmandzadeh, coming off a career year, stayed with Cincinnati. Randy Moss' trade from Minnesota to Oakland became official, and tight end Marcus Pollard was released by Indianapolis.

Mason, 31, should give a boost to one of the most feeble passing offenses around. The Ravens ranked 31st in passing last season and their leading receiver, Kevin Johnson, had 35 receptions. Mason had nearly as many as Baltimore's top three pass catchers.

"We were high on his list, and he was high on our list," Ravens general manager Ozzie Newsome said. "He was really the only receiver we have had any active discussions with thus far. What this does is we bring in a veteran receiver who has the type of attitude and type of personality that we look for in a football player."

Mason's 96 catches trailed only Kansas City's tight end Tony Gonzalez last year and accounted for 1,168 yards and seven touchdowns.

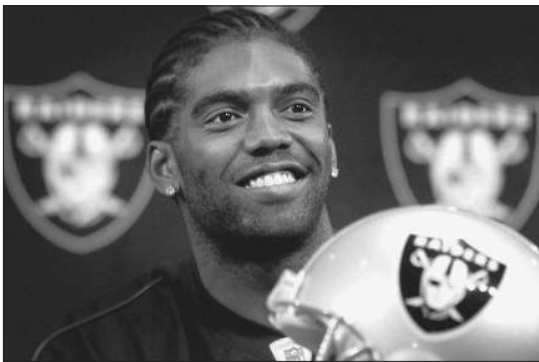
"The signing of Derrick Mason is the most substantial move we've made, particularly in free agency, particularly at the wide receiver position," Ravens coach Brian Billicek said. "When you take someone of Derrick Mason's caliber, you expect it to have an impact."

Pollard played a big role in the development of the potent Indianapolis offense led by Peyton Manning. But the Colts saved \$2.65 million in salary cap space by releasing the 10-year veteran.

Houshmandzadeh made a strong impact for the Bengals in his breakthrough 2004 season. He caught 73 passes for 978 yards and four touchdowns and was particularly effective when Peter Warrick was injured.

"It was tempting to get out and really test the water as a free agent, but in my heart, what I wanted was to be in Cincinnati," Houshmandzadeh said. "I told my agents that, and they were able to get a good deal done."

"I'm glad to have it all off my mind. I can now get focused. I think the Bengals are going to have a great season, and



New Oakland wide receiver Randy Moss smiles during a news conference on Wednesday, at the Raiders' headquarters in Alameda, Calif., after the team completed a trade with the Vikings for the star receiver.

I want to be a part of it."

Moss didn't want to be a part of the Vikings any longer and the deal with Oakland was struck last week. The Raiders traded a No. 1 pick, seventh overall, linebacker Napoleon Harris and a later draft choice for Moss.

"Who wouldn't want to be in the Silver and Black?" Moss asked. "I'm committed to excellence and

I just want to win, baby."

Moss, 28, will provide a huge upgrade to an offense determined to return to the high-powered vertical passing game of years past. It was their proficient passing attack that led the Raiders to the Super Bowl after the 2002 season won 48-21 by Tampa Bay.

"I don't see this team slipping with the addition of me. I just see them adding more firepower," Moss said.

Moss was bothered by a hamstring injury for much of last season and didn't reach 1,000 yards receiving for the first time in his seven-year career. He finished with 49 catches for 767 yards and 13 touchdowns.

When healthy, though, he is a fearsome downfield threat.

"If he's not the best, he's certainly one of the best," Raiders quarterback Kerry Collins said. "You can make a strong argument. Everybody has their own opinions. But ask any quarterback around the league who receives they'd want, and I think most would say Randy Moss."

■ In addition to Moss, Oakland was closing in on signing Jets backup runner LaMont Jordan, who spent four years behind Curtis Martin in New York. But averaged 4.9 yards per carry.

"There's no question we're

working on signing a running back," coach Norv Turner said. "I don't know where we're at. He's certainly a guy we're familiar with. We know a lot about him."

"We have a deal in principle that he should sign tomorrow morning — 99.9 percent sure he will be a Raider," Jordan's agent, Alvin Keels, said in an e-mail Wednesday night.

Oakland released veteran running back Tyrone Wheatley on Wednesday, along with defensive tackle John Parrella.

■ The Vikings added more defensive help by agreeing to terms with tackle Pat Williams, late of Buffalo, on a three-year deal worth \$13 million, with a \$6 million signing bonus. The eight-year veteran should bolster a line that has Pro Bowl tackle Kevin Williams but ranked 28th on defense last season.

The Bills' other coveted free agent, left tackle Jonas Jennings, was close to signing with the San Francisco 49ers.

Jennings, a four-year vet, generally is considered the top free agent available at his position. Jennings' agent, Todd France, met with 49ers officials all day at

club headquarters, and ESPN.com reported a deal had been reached.

■ Cleveland traded defensive tackle Gerard Warren, the third overall pick in the 2001 draft, to Denver for a fourth-round draft choice. The Broncos need help up front after deciding not to re-sign free agent Reggie Hayward, who led the club with 10½ sacks last season.

On Thursday, Hayward signed with the Jacksonville Jaguars. The contract pays the defensive end \$25 million with \$10 million guaranteed.

Then the Browns signed guard Joe Andruzzi, a starter on all three of New England's Super Bowl winners, to a four-year, \$9 million deal that reunites him with new Browns coach Romeo Crennel, the former Patriots defensive coordinator.

"Joe is a tough, hard-nosed, blue-collar football player," Crennel said. "He gives us flexibility by being able to play both left and right guard and he will add stability to our offensive line."

■ St. Louis signed 32-year-old linebacker Dexter Coakley, one day after he was released by Dallas. Coakley is fourth on the Cowboys' career tackles list with 1,046, but Dallas cut him rather than pay a \$500,000 roster bonus.

■ Dallas bolstered its defense by filling one of its pressing needs when the Cowboys signed cornerback Anthony Henry to a five-year contract. Henry had four interceptions last season, starting 14 games with Cleveland.

The Cowboys scheduled a news conference for Thursday morning to introduce Henry. The cornerback might not be the only new player involved, but team officials said they would have no more announcements before then.

Defensive tackle Jason Ferguson, one of the team's top offensive targets, and Pro Bowl offensive guard Marco Rivera, were both in Dallas talking to team officials Wednesday.

Culpepper denies he instigated big trade

The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS

Vikings quarterback Daunte Culpepper is bewildered and hurt by suggestions he was responsible for the departure of wide receiver Randy Moss.

In an interview with the Star Tribune for Thursday's edition, Culpepper insisted he did nothing to force the trade the Vikings finalized with the Oakland Raiders earlier Wednesday.

Culpepper acknowledged he did not always approve of Moss' conduct, but said overcoming the loss of his top receiver will be as difficult as dealing with his flaws.

"This trade, I hated to see it," Culpepper told the Star Tribune. "I guess it's a business, and as a team we have to move on. One thing we know, by looking at New England, is that teams win championships, not individuals. ... But there's no way we can replace Randy. There's no way to find a guy that does what he does."

As a team, we're going to have to find a way to pick up the slack."

"I can't speak for everybody," Culpepper continued. "Moss rubbed everybody in different ways, but he wasn't that bad of a guy. He has a certain way of going about things, and there were things that I definitely disagreed with him on. But he's still my friend and I never had any real beef with him."

Culpepper said comments he made at the Pro Bowl that some interpreted as approving a trade were misunderstood.

"I never wanted to see Randy leave. And I never said that I didn't know how it got out that I did. I want to make that clear."

Maybe the Vikings organization was ready to move on, but that was never what I was saying. He's a once-in-a-lifetime player," he said.

Last month, at the Pro Bowl, Culpepper said of Moss: "He's my good friend, but you almost get to thinking that maybe enough is enough. And maybe the Vikings organization has had enough."

The Vikings have said little about their reasons for making the trade. In a statement Wednesday, owner Red McCombs said he was undecided to go in a different direction at this point."

Other team officials deferred comment ahead of McCombs' teleconference with reporters Thursday.



Derrick Mason led all wideouts with 96 catches last season. He should boost the Ravens' passing game ranked 31st last year.

Kent rips MLB drug policy for not being hard enough

BY JOHN SHEA

San Francisco Chronicle

VERO BEACH, Fla. — Some baseball people say they're taking a wait-and-see approach to the new drug-testing policy. Not Jeff Kent.

"I still don't think it's good enough," the Los Angeles Dodgers second baseman said. "I mentioned [union chief] Don Fehr a long time ago, if we're going to give up the privilege of privacy, we've got to do it right. If we're not going to do it right, then don't do it at all."

"I'm disappointed with Major League Baseball and the [players] association for not imple-

menting a plan that is completely solid. We need to prove to the fans that there's no question baseball should be clean and is clean, and we're not sending the right message with this policy."

Random testing began Thursday at spring training camps in Arizona and Florida. Players will be subjected to one unannounced test and could be called for further testing (including in the offseason) through a computerized process of random selection. First-time offenders would be suspended 10 days without pay. Only urine is tested, not blood.

Steroid experts have taken shots at the new policy for several reasons, and Kent focused on two

— the lack of an independent firm overseeing the testing and penalizing, making it possible for MLB to cover up players' steroid use, and the lack of amphetamines on the list of banned substances.

Also, players still can take performance-enhancing drugs without consequences. For example, human growth hormone is on the banned list, but it's irrelevant because HGH can't be detected in urine, only in blood.

"We still need a third party to oversee the issue because some information could be suppressed, who knows," Kent said. "You need an independent party judging results. Without it, it's not a valid enough policy."



Jeff Kent, the 2000 NL MVP when he played with the San Francisco Giants, says baseball's drug policy is not strong enough.

Regarding amphetamines, Kent said, "It's a daily pick-me-up. Without a prescription, it's illegal, like steroids. Guys get addicted and can't stop, and that's what Major League Baseball needs to fix, too."

Kent, the National League's

Most Valuable Player in 2000 who's training for his first season with the Dodgers, said MLB and the union fell short in January when announcing the policy, which has been criticized as too soft by other people in uniform, including Texas Rangers pitcher Kenny Rogers and Washington Nationals manager Frank Robinson.

It pales in comparison to the Olympics' two-year ban for a first positive test and extensive list of banned substances (10 pages in all), but Commissioner Bud Selig said the policy will be a deterrent largely because players won't want their names forever linked to steroids by getting caught once.

While the Olympics have an independent body overseeing and administering the entire policy, including the punitive phase, baseball's procedure is fuzzier. An Olympic-accredited drug-testing lab in Montreal will send the test results to MLB, and it'll be up to baseball officials to take the next step.

"We're continuing to beat around the bush," Kent said. "Major League Baseball should set a higher standard, like the Olympic athletes. We are the best of the best. Why shouldn't we be accountable for things? I think we should."

"The fact we're made so public in the role-model arena, and then if secrets get out, like in steroid issues, it paints a bad picture for children. That's too risky. As a player, I think Major League Baseball has tried. They need to try a little harder."

"Do I feel cheated?" Kent said. "All the non-users feel cheated. I think in a silent way, a lot of people who hadn't cheated over the years are happy with the way the media exposed the problem, and they're happy we're making progress toward evening the playing field."

For six seasons, Kent and Barry Bonds were a potent 1-2 punch for the San Francisco Giants. Bonds' grand jury testimony in the BALCO case, along with the testimonies of Jason Giambi, Gary Sheffield and others, helped pressure baseball to establish the stiffer policy.

Without mentioning Bonds' name, Kent said, "Hank Aaron has made a lot of comments about steroid use. I don't know if anyone ever asked him how he feels about the possibility of somebody breaking his records because of issues being presented in the last couple of years. I'm a part of it, too, and it's just embarrassing. I just hope we fix it and fix it right."

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SPORTS



Companies make bid to buy NHL's 30 teams, Page 27

Bryant, accuser settle civil suit

NBA star reaches deal to end sexual assault case; terms undisclosed

BY JON SARCHIE
The Associated Press

DENVER — With a terse news release and an even terser court filing, the sordid sexual assault case against Kobe Bryant that gripped the nation abruptly ended with an agreement that ensures the NBA star never goes to trial for what happened in a hotel room two years ago.

Few experts believed the civil lawsuit would ever be heard by a jury, saying it was unlikely that Bryant and the 20-year-old woman who accused him of raping her relished the prospect of having to divulge potentially embarrassing, intimate details in a courtroom.

The case tarnished both Bryant, 27, arguably the NBA's best player, and the woman, a former high school cheerleader who once tried out for "American Idol" and found herself the subject of Internet speculation.

Terms of the settlement were not released. Law experts said the agreement probably spelled out financial penalties for revealing any details.



Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant shoots during warmups prior to a game against the Boston Celtics in Boston on Wednesday. AP

A two-sentence statement faxed to The Associated Press by Bryant's attorneys said only that the matter had been resolved

"to the satisfaction of both parties."

"The parties and their attorneys have agreed that no further comments about the matter can or will be made," the statement said. A one-sentence motion for dismissal stipulating that the case can never be refiled was filed simultaneously in Denver federal court.

After a few more days of intense speculation about Wednesday's settlement — how much money, whether any details can ever be released — the case will quickly fade from view, said Denver attorney Scott Robinson.

"Ultimately a new scandal, a new public shame will come along and both the plaintiff and the defendant can pretty much go about their lives," he said.

A Los Angeles Lakers spokesman said Bryant had declined comment on the settlement. Bryant scored 26 points Wednesday night in Boston, but the Celtics still beat the Lakers 104-101.

"It's in both parties' interests to have this remain confidential," said Los Angeles at-

torney Steve Cron, who is familiar with celebrity cases. "That's one of the incentives for them to settle: He didn't have to do a deposition, the lurid details wouldn't be posted on some Web site, she didn't have to face the rigors of having a deposition by his lawyers and she'll gain some privacy as well."

The lawsuit, filed three weeks before the criminal case against Bryant collapsed last summer, sought unspecified damages for mental injuries, public scorn and humiliation the woman said she has suffered since their June 2003 encounter at the Vail-area hotel where she worked. The woman hasn't commented publicly on the case.

Bryant, a married father of one, apologized for his "behavior that night and for the consequences she has suffered," but insisted the sex was consensual.

Shortly after jury selection began in the criminal case, prosecutors in Eagle County dropped the single felony sexual assault count after the woman told them she couldn't take part in a trial.

SEE SETTLE ON PAGE 17

Off to a good start



Washington Nationals' Jose Guillen, right, is congratulated by teammate Brad Wilkerson after hitting a two-run home run against the New York Mets in the fourth inning of their spring training opener, Wednesday in Viera, Fla. The Nationals won their first game after moving from Montreal, beating the Mets 5-3. For complete spring training coverage, see story on Page 29.



Moss, Mason top list of deals on first day of free agency

Page 30



UConn's Calhoun latest to earn 700th victory

Page 28